

“Blest Be the Architect”: Church-Building in Foxe, Spenser, Lanyer, and Herbert

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ABSTRACT

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My dissertation examines the imagery of church building in early modern English literature. It spans from Henry VIII's Dissolution of monastic houses in the 1530s to the poetry of George Herbert in the 1630s, and traces the influence of theological writings, architectural history, and religious doctrine on the formation of a formal thematic element. In studies of architectural images that appear in English literature after the Dissolution, the focus is often on ruins, which are read as a representation of anxiety about the lastingness of literary works in the wake of the vast social upheavals of the Reformation. However, given the importance of the Resurrection and redemptive history to the English Church in the early modern period, ruination in a religious context can also symbolize eternal redemption. To that end, I trace images of churches in disrepair in early modern poetry, and examine how those images are used by the authors to rebuild figuratively their subject following personal or political loss, and through that activity, to defend their work's effectiveness. I first examine the theological and historical associations of the church as a space of communal redemption in the English Church, and how those associations become thematic features in John Foxe's seminal *Actes and Monuments* (1570). I then examine manifestations of this theme in three major Protestant poetic works: Edmund Spenser's lament for Philip Sidney in *The Ruines of Time* (1591), Aemilia Lanyer's praise of the disinherited Margaret Clifford in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), and George Herbert's pastoral struggles in *The Temple* (1633). In excavating the redemptive connotations of church imagery in these works, I demonstrate how early modern English authors borrow from church practice and narrative to craft their own literary identities and purposes.

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Introduction	1
1. The English Church as Resurrection Space, the “Great Rebuilding,” and the Church of John Foxe	17
1. Introduction	
2. The Redemptive Historical Narrative and the English Church	
3. Monasteries and Material Culture in the Early English Reformation	
4. John Foxe’s <i>Actes and Monuments</i> (1570): Building a Textual Church	
2. The Church of Philip Sidney: Resurrection and the City of God in Spenser’s <i>Ruines of Time</i>	71
1. Introduction	
2. Verulamium and the City of Man	
3. Sidney, Poetry, and the City of God	
4. The Church of Philip Sidney and Spenser’s Defense	
3. The Church of Margaret Clifford: or, the “Cookeham” That Lanyer Built	114
1. Introduction	
2. Margaret Clifford as the Bride of Christ: <i>The Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum</i>	
3. Cookeham	
4. Introductory Epistles	
4. The Church of George Herbert: Rebuilding the Poet in <i>The Temple</i>	161
1. Introduction	
2. The Poet’s Heart and Work: Spaces of God’s Presence	
3. Rebuilding the Poet’s Heart-Church	
4. Reifying the Heart-Church: Inviting the Reader In	
5. Epilogue	210
Bibliography	214

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Frontispiece for the <i>Geneva Bible</i> , 1560	66
2. Plan of Tichfield Abbey	67
3. Present day photo of Tichfield Abbey	68
4. Frontispiece to Foxe's <i>Actes and Monuments</i> , 1570	69
5. Kentish brass grave marker, 1590s	70
6. Map of Hartfordshire from Drayton's <i>Poly-Olbion</i> , 1622	113
7. Rosicrucian emblem of Daniel Cramer, 1617	208
8. Layout of Barnoldswick, Yorkshire parish church	209

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INTRODUCTION

This is a dissertation about images of churches in early modern English literature, and how authors build on the religious implications of those images to shape their understanding of the lastingness of their work. It examines four representative literary works in the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline periods between 1570 and 1633, and also looks to their origins in the Henrican era of English religion in the 1530s. To be more specific, the images examined in this dissertation are of ruined or broken churches in the process of *rebuilding*, which transforms them into viable, functional structures. These images are used to describe the author's subject in instances when that subject is threatened by ruin or misfortune – be it John Foxe's imagined audience, the English Protestant Church, in the *Actes and Monuments* (1570); Philip Sidney, the late revered poet for whom Edmund Spenser mourns in the *Ruines of Time* (1591); the landless Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland, in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611); or the speaker whose sinful heart mars his poetic endeavors in George Herbert's *The Temple* (1633). Portrayals of these subjects as churches provide an imaginative space for Foxe, Spenser, Lanyer, and Herbert to create poetic representations of those subjects that might transcend ruination.

This project attempts to engage, and in some ways reframe, a critical dialogue in early modern literary studies about the use of ruins in early modern poetic instantiations of the classical immortality-of-poetry *topos*. Since Horace described his poetry as a “monument more lasting than bronze” (*exegi monumentum aere perennius*) in the *Odes*, poets in the Western tradition have relied on this *topos* both to assert poetry's capacity to preserve the memory of worthy subjects forever where physical monuments might be obliterated, and to express anxiety

about its capacity to do so.¹ The English literary tradition in particular evinces an uncertainty about the truth of these claims by depicting monuments that have already been ruined. Anne Janowitz defines this English trend as a genre, which she calls “the Ruin Poem,” and which often subverts the immortality-of-poetry *topos* to accomplish its purposes.² Janowitz argues that ruined buildings in English literature function as spaces to re-imagine Britain during historical periods of transition, as they “provide a historical provenance for the conception of the British nation as immemorially ancient.”³ For her, ruins poems enact this purpose by fixating on the past as a marker of present English identity, and paradoxically by mourning the transience of physical buildings.

In recent years, literary scholars have demonstrated that ruination imagery in late Elizabethan literature responds in particular to the major transitional period of the English Reformation, exemplified itself by an act of wholesale destruction – Henry VIII's Dissolution of

¹. “Ode 3.30” in *Horace's Odes and Epodes*, trans. David Mulroy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 127.

². Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1990), 7-10. Her focus specifically is on nineteenth-century Romantic poetry, and how ruination “through its naturalization subsumes cultural and class difference into a conflated representation of Britain as nature's inevitable product.” There is an inherent conflict in execution almost from its inception, according to Janowitz, as this *topos* is “often linked” to the similarly ambivalent “inexpressibility *topos*,” and by the Romantic period immortality-of-poetry “approaches and then merges with its ruined objects of observation, drawing in its wake a collapse of the distinction between poem and building, self and object of contemplation” (7-9). Janowitz' work is one of many critical examinations of architectural themes in English poetry as means of reassessing the past in order to define national identity in the present. See Anne Myers' more recent work on the “consciously perceived” relationship between “written text and built environment” in the seventeenth century, in which she claims that early modern writing about architecture “belonged more properly to the fields of literature and historiography” because buildings were understood as another way “to tell human stories” (*Literature and Architecture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 5-7). See also David Galbraith's work on how Daniel, Dryden and Sidney use spatial structure metaphors – buildings, architecture, landscape more generally – to create an imaginative space where boundaries of poetry and history can be collapsed (*Architectonics of Imitation in Dryden, Sidney, Daniel*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000). These studies have roots in the cultural materialism of scholarship in the 1980's in their attempts to read physical objects as if they do an analogous kind of cultural, ideological work as texts. See Ian Hodder's critique of this methodology in “This is Not an Article About Material Culture As Text,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 8 (1989), 250-269.

³. *England's Ruins*, 4.

the Monasteries between 1536 and 1539.⁴ This act, and the larger movement it represents, has been described by many as a “rupture” in English history that left contemporary thinkers in need of some sort of account for their present state in spite of past misfortune.⁵ In regard to Edmund Spenser, for example, Phillip Schwyzer has argued that this need results in a focus on the “theme of ruination,” which is “in no way surprising, given that their land was littered with substantial ruined structures.”⁶ Schwyzer suggests that these poets express fears about the lastingness of their poetry by describing ruins as destructive sites, where “for such abomination, the durability of texts provides no compensation.”⁷

While ambivalence towards literature’s – and specifically poetry’s – lastingness certainly exists in this period, Schwyzer’s readings do not account for the ways in which the worldview of these religious institutions whose ruins scattered the geographical and poetic landscapes might help in the interpretation of their meaning. For, in this context, ruins do not have to be merely reminders of failure, but also hold the potential for reparation. Rebeca Helfer’s more recent work on the trope of ruination in the poetry of Spenser, for example, demonstrates that these anxious readings misinterpret the more productive mechanisms inherent in the ruination tropes of earlier Christian literary traditions. She argues that ruins are a “master metaphor of sorts in the

⁴. Janowitz also explores this briefly, although for her the trend starts with a fragment of an anonymous eighth-century Old English poem found in the Exeter Book known simply as “The Ruin.” She is particularly interested in the case of Spenser in the 1590’s, who associates England with Rome by means of the Roman ruins that dot the English Landscape.

⁵. Anne Myers, *Literature and Architecture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 9.

⁶. Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies Of English Renaissance Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 73.

⁷. *Archaeologies*, 78. Schwyzer ultimately posits a “double vision” as the solution, using ruins – as both a presence and the marker for an absence – as a way to take on multiple perspectives of different time periods on same plane in order to express the “ambiguity” of poetry’s capacities and temporal limits, since “a ruin is always a dual entity, both a thing in itself and a sign of absence.” (87)

Renaissance for the activity of disinterring the past for the present,” and function as what Jennifer Summit calls a “project of cultural recovery that accompanied England's long Reformation.”⁸ Within this cultural project, Helfer posits, Spenser and others engage with medieval Christian strategies of meditative locational memory in making fiction about the past that “edifies” the reader in the present. These strategies allow Spenser to use the trope of ruination to fictively “repair” the vagaries of actual time into perpetuity, because in Spenser’s poetry, ruins are fictive places to both “remember the past” and create “a space of innovation” in the present.

Critical Intervention

This project, to indulge in pun, “builds” upon Helfer's work on the ways in which ruination tropes can fictively repair the past. But my impulse is to focus less on how authors replicate past monuments to sustain the present, and more on how they use present ruins to build into the future. In the pursuit of this goal, I take a more religiously-oriented route into the meaning of post-Reformation ruins in England, and argue that, in addition to the immortality-of-poetry *topos*, the figurative ruins in question can also be productively interpreted through the lens of church imagery as a signifier of the lastingness of the poet's work.⁹

In order to better explore those religious meanings, I aim for an engagement with religious themes and their influence on late Elizabethan poetry. I look for theology in action, specifically in regards to ecclesiology, or the theology of the church, and church practice.

⁸. *Spenser's Ruins and the Art of Recollection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012). Summit cited in Helfer, 8.

⁹. This is also not to suggest that the nature of church imagery is unique to English Protestantism, as it can also be seen in the theology of the Continental Reformation, the Catholic church, and in Puritan thought – English Protestantism is my particular focus, but it draws deeply from the Western tradition of the church, whose understanding of itself can be seen in similarities across period, country and confessional stance.

Disagreements over the use and status of religious artifacts and ceremonies in the Church of England were, according to Acshah Guibbory, concerned with “different ways of constructing social relations [and] human identity,” so that religious praxis can be a means of interpreting the English’s Church’s communal identity.¹⁰ Many seventeenth-century scholars, in their readings of Donne, Herbert, Milton, and other religious poets of the era, have demonstrated the effect that controversies over the theology of various ceremonies and artifacts have had on the “sacramental” meaning, purpose, or function of poetry itself.¹¹ But I want to consider how the church as a physical space of Christian communal praxis provides a template for enacting forms of identity in literary texts.¹²

By “church” I mean a few different things. Most importantly, I mean the “mystical community” that takes its identity from the death and resurrection of Christ. Its purpose, of course, starts with the Resurrection – the mystical event that brings the future hope of eternal life into a progression of time marked by death. This community spans the length of Christian history, and encompasses many smaller individual congregations and religious communities at different periods in history. As such, I am also referring to that community’s historical place and

¹⁰. *Ceremony and Community From Herbert to Milton: literature, religion, and cultural conflict in seventeenth-century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), i.

¹¹. See Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community*; Kimberly Johnson, *Made Flesh: Sacrament and Poetics in Post-Reformation England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Ryan Netzley, *Reading, Desire and the Eucharist in Early Modern Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

¹². Some work has been done on the Church as a trope in early modern poetry, but in different methodological veins, and primarily in seventeenth-century literature. See John Wall, *Transformations of the Word: Spenser, Herbert, Vaughan* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), who argues that the Church is central to seventeenth-century poets because of its institutional status: “Spenser, Herbert and Vaughan set out to promote the social agenda of the Church of England, both its assurance-giving worship and its transformation-promoting goal of realizing the true Christian commonwealth in England.” (6) Ken Simpson explores the “spiritual architecture” of *Paradise Regained*, a work he claims demonstrates how the post-Civil War Church itself was “built” by the literary activities of poets such as John Milton, who relies on imaginative architectural metaphors to talk about the Church Triumphant (*Spiritual Architecture and Paradise Regained* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 2007), iii). The former is about looking for engagement with theological positions and investments; the latter is about the reverse influence of literature on ecclesiology.

significance – on the one hand, the Church in the present functions as a fulfillment of the Old Testament conception of Israel as the chosen People of God, who are represented by the Temple, because that is the site where God meets his People.¹³ On the other hand, the Church in the present also functions as a sign of hope for future redemption at the end of Christian history. According to theologian Ben Meyer, “many of the Biblical authors see the Church within history as a foretaste or anticipation of what the Church is to be. Paul sees it as a temple still in the process of being built, a body still growing into mature manhood” that will not attain that maturity until the Second Coming of Christ, when God brings the New Jerusalem down onto the new earth, and dwells eternally with his people.¹⁴

The Church's historical position, caught as it is between the state of fulfilling old promises and signifying the promise of future redemption, situates members of the Church in a perpetual tension between past, present, and future. This sense of the Church community being “already-but-not-yet”¹⁵ complete is the reason why a church or a Christian that faces the utter ruination of the past in the present can still have hope that they will be made eternally whole. Thus the situation of the Church in time informs its meaning and purpose as a site where past and present meet and overlap, allowing redemption and restoration in the midst of temporal decay, destruction, sin, and misfortune.

The potential of perpetual renewal and the promise of future hope also inform the makeup of the physical church building. For while the building provides space for Christians to gather each Sunday for worship and liturgy, it also signals that church community's

¹³ . *Ceremony and Community*, 174.

¹⁴ . *Christus Faber: The Master Builder and the House of God* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1992), 110-111.

¹⁵ . Michael Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 13.

understanding of its purpose through its aesthetic representations.¹⁶ When I refer to images of church buildings, then, I am referring lastly to images of buildings that signify a site where the overlap of past promise and future hope creates a viable, restorative present amidst a community redeemed from past destruction.

This project continues the kind of detailed work with the history of the Reformation that has become a staple of work in seventeenth-century literary scholarship.¹⁷ With the fabled “turn to religion” in early modern studies during the backlash to New Historicism, we have largely moved away from reading religion as merely the ideological strong-arm of the law, and as Debora Shuger explains it, we have come to an understanding that religion was “*the* cultural matrix” of almost every social discourse, because “the English Renaissance was a religious culture, not simply a culture whose members generally were religious.”¹⁸ We have also moved

¹⁶. Usually demonstrated in choices about the material and location of artifacts such as the altar, the rood lofts, the windows, the lectern, and icons. See Anne Myers reading of Herbert's “The Church Porch,” in which the poem “does not depend on a progression from material to spiritual, nor does it assume any opposition between the two. Rather, it teaches the reader that these categories are inseparable; one folds perpetually back into the other, and expanses of eternity are written through the histories of daily life.” (108) Maarten Delbeke also argues that churches of both Conformist and Catholic persuasions in early modern England were “read and used as analogous spaces” by “incorporating important historical and symbolical meanings,” so that the allegorization of church buildings became a way during confessional debates to talk about each side's conflicting vision of what the church as a community should look like. (Delbeke and Anne-Francoise Morel. “Metaphors in Action: Early Modern Church Buildings as Spaces of Knowledge,” *Architectural History*, Vol. 53 (2010), 99-122. 99); Delbeke points out also that these ecclesiastical metaphors were so embedded in Christian thought and practice that their meaning was roughly the same across Catholic and Protestant lines in the early modern period (102).

¹⁷. I am speaking specifically about *theological* – and specifically ecclesiological – work within the study of religion; Helfer, for example, works extensively with medieval religious traditions, but not theology in and of itself, and particularly not post-Reformation theology. Religious themes are also, often, subordinated to larger cultural themes in studies of architecture or ruins in literature; Anne Myers, in another example, subordinates Reformation thought to broader conceptions of early modern historiography: while she sees the Dissolution of the Monasteries as a “rupture” in historical thought that occasioned much thought and re-evaluation of the nature of historiographical buildings, “this is not to claim that the texts I discuss in this book are all in some way about the Reformation; it is to suggest that certain effects of the Reformation provide a useful way of accounting for or tracing ... history.” (9) One notable exception to this trend is Darryl Gless's *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), which specifically examines theological constructions of meaning in Spenser's work, and argues for scholarly approaches that put the theological texts of the English Reformation on the same scholarly plane, subject to the same hermeneutical questions of varying interpretation, as sixteenth-century literary works (2).

past topical readings of religious poetry that see poems primarily as vehicles for parsing the confessional identity of the poets who wrote them, and are focusing our scholarly energies on reading religious themes, topics and narratives in early modern literature on their own terms and for their own sake.¹⁹ There are many scholarly works parsing both the influence of theology on “Protestant poetics” – on how, as Kimberly Johnson puts it, Reformation theology influences “*how* poems say as opposed to *what* poems say” – and of the religious signification of ruination.²⁰ My goal in this dissertation is to bring these two together – to look at how ruination evokes religious themes within discussions of poetics and poetic purpose. In doing so, I hope to extend possibilities for further attention to religious imagery in early modern studies.

The Shape of Things to Come

In this dissertation, I examine what happens when we re-situate the presence of ruins in the work of four major writers – John Foxe, Edmund Spenser, Aemilia Lanyer, and George Herbert – within the context of Protestant ecclesiology, and read those ruins as if they really are about ruined church buildings. Each author uses “church” as a thematic element, or a pattern of

¹⁸. Owing largely to the work of scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). See Shuger, *Habits of Thought in English Renaissance*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). She goes on to say that “Religion is, first of all, not simply politics in disguise, a set of beliefs that represent and legitimate the social order by grounding it in the absolute ... Religion during this period supplies the primary language of analysis. It is the cultural matrix for explorations of virtually every topic: kingship, selfhood, rationality, language, marriage, ethics, and so forth” (6).

¹⁹. See John King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982). Spenser in particular is read for Protestant themes and religious influence. See, to name a few, Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Carol Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); John King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

²⁰. *Made Flesh: Sacrament and Poetics in Seventeenth Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 2. For works on Protestant Poetics, see Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Daniel Swift, *Shakespeare's Common Prayers: The Book of Common Prayers and the Elizabethan Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); James Simpson, *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).

metaphor, to describe what their poetry does. According to Margaret Ferguson, imagery of ruination frequently appears in English poetry as a way to talk about poetic efficacy because “ruins naturally conjure up fears of mortality, and for poets, ruins frequently inspire thoughts about that metaphorical death that is voicelessness. The afflatus of ruin, one might say, often produces poems about the ruin of afflatus.”²¹ And yet, the “afflatus of ruin” might similarly produce literature about the redemption of afflatus, and about the poetic capacity to rebuild. These authors’ use of church imagery to describe how their work functions therefore becomes the foundation upon which they mount a defense of their own literature and purpose.

Specifically, each of these authors uses language and imagery associated with “church” to describe their subject as a church building at risk of ruination, but whose purpose and situation in history allows the church-subject to become a vehicle of redemption and vitality. These ruins do this not only, as the immortality-of-poetry-*topos* critics suggest, by enabling the subject to last eternally, but also by creating a space where the subject and speaker's relationship sustains each other at a site that redeems past destruction by proffering hope for the future well-being of either subject, speaker, or both. Churches as entities intertwine bodies and buildings figuratively in the act of making community, and these texts figuratively combine both bodies and buildings through the depiction of subjects as churches. The subjects then become a figurative point of reference for author, reader, and subject to co-exist together through the author's work and the reader's reading.

Each author takes up some thread of this configuration and develops it into a viable strategy in their depiction of their subject -- be it Foxe, who first poses his text as a figurative church where the broken bodies of English Protestant martyrs are re-built into a space for the

²¹. “The Afflatus of Ruin”: Meditations on Rome by du Bellay, Spenser, and Stevens” in *Roman Images*, ed. Annabel Patterson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1983), 23-51. 23.

readers' edification; or Spenser, who reaches into the future hope of the Second Coming to console himself in his recent loss of Philip Sidney; or Lanyer, who recuperates the past of her patron, Margaret Clifford, the Countess of Cumberland, in her present community; or Herbert, who reifies his poetic failings into imagery of church architecture laden with redemptive potential. These authors are by no means the only ones who rely on church imagery of some sort in the period at hand.²² However, I focus on them because they each ask questions within their narrative about how best to sustain their own work. All four have interests in successfully vouchsafing the legacies and reputations of themselves or their patrons through the lastingness of their work – Foxe saw his text as critical to the sustaining of the English Protestant cause; Spenser, the Poet Laureate, persistently desired to return to the English court from Ireland; Lanyer was well-known for *unsuccessfully* attempting to gain her subject's patronage; and Herbert, as a priest, saw the care and salvation of his congregation as his primary purpose in ministry.²³ They are also Protestants who share an English theological lineage with the Elizabethan period, and would have been familiar with the understandings of "church" that were integral to the Church of England of their time.

My argument that church imagery contains resurrective poetic potential might strike some as blasphemous. It begs the question: would such overtly Protestant writers deny the Almighty his omnipotence, or attempt to ascribe divine power to themselves as poets? Would

²². Other notable examples include Shakespeare's "bare ruin'd choirs" of Sonnet 73 and the iconographic imagery in *Venus and Adonis* (1592-3); the metaphorical temple of love in Spenser's *Amoretti* (1595), the Blatant Beast's destruction of the monastery in Book VI of the *Faerie Queene* (1596). Philip Sidney, in his *Defense of Poesy* (1595), also defends poetry's religious uses, and claims that it, when "being rightly applied, deserveth not to be scourged out of the Church of God." Ed. J.A. Van Dorsten (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 22.

²³. For Spenser's patronage history, see Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). For Lanyer's, see Susanne Woods, introduction to *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xv-xli. For Herbert's dedication to pastoral care, see "A Priest to His Temple," in *George Herbert: The Complete Poems*, ed. John Tobin (New York: Penguin Press, 1991), 199-264.

this not constitute idolatry? To be clear, I am not arguing that literature *replaces* the divine for these authors, nor that they claim for themselves the power that only belongs to God. Rather, the authors act in *imitation* of the divine Creator, and facilitate Christ's work in the world. As Philip Sidney himself argues in the *Defense of Poesy* (published in 1595), the poet's capacity for invention is God-given, and gives "right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to his own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings."²⁴ The poet acts as a maker whose vocation imitates the first Maker; his or her creation of worlds within poetry does not set up an idol, it relies on God's "divine breath" to give life to human invention, and so is divinely sanctioned. Furthermore, my goal is to assess the authors' intentions in these texts: I look both at moments of literary defense or theory, and moments in which the author puts those theories to practice, by examining clues in the text that show us where the author meant to direct the reader, and how the author wants the text to be read. The extent to which the author succeeds is, in this case, beside the point.

There are several architectural genres that, though related to the topic at hand, I will not examine for the sake of doing justice to all. Chief among these are those traditions that arose from the Greco-Roman period from whence the immortality-of-poetry *topos* sprang, including examples of classical rhetoric that use architectural metaphors to talk about the structure of oratorical learning, particularly in Cicero's *De Oratore* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.²⁵ These also include later instantiations of rhetorical theory in medieval Christian works such as Gregory

²⁴. *Defense*, 24.

²⁵. Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. E.W. Sutton and H. Rackham (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1942); *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1954).

of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, and the *Discalicon* of Hugh of St. Victor.²⁶ Such texts and traditions laid the groundwork for the later medieval meditative tradition that is central to Rebeca Helfer's reading of ruination in Spenser's poetry.²⁷ Related to these are architectonic trends in early modern rhetoric and poetry, derived from the classical tradition, which rose to prominence in English poetics with the revival of interest in classical thought during the heyday of humanism. These include neo-platonic, "secular" texts from the Continental Renaissance, including Leon Battista Alberti's *Ten Books on Architecture*, and the extremely influential *Hypnerotomachia*, whose French translation became a mainstay of both the French and English Renaissances.²⁸ While these texts and traditions are obvious influences on the poets under examination, a thorough account of the interactions between the classical tradition, the history of humanist thought, and Reformation theology is beyond the scope of this dissertation. I therefore take these traditions' influence as a given and, in light of their comprehensive treatment by other scholars, focus on the extent to which the ecclesiology of church buildings reshapes their presence in the texts at hand.

My methodological approach focuses heavily on figurative imagery in particular because it is, I believe, the most productive way to situate this literary question within the context of theological meaning. Christian thought upholds the status of images as uniquely complex

²⁶. Hugh of St. Victor, *The didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: a medieval guide to the arts*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 135; Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *The Poetria Nova* (1202), trans. Margaret Nims (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1967), 17.

²⁷. This tradition, described in more depth by Mary Carruthers, relies on techniques of locational memory derived from classical rhetorical theory using spatial mnemonics to "build" devotional thoughts by analogy. See Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and "Poet as Master Builder: Composition and Locational Memory in the Middle Ages." *New Literary History*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Papers from the Commonwealth Center for Literary and Cultural Change (Autumn, 1993), 881-904.

²⁸. Alberti, *Ten Books of Architecture*, trans. Cosimo Bartoli (London: A Tiranti, 1955); Colonna, Francesco. *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili : the strife of love in a dream*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999). I will, however, be including the works of the French poet du Bellay in my chapter on Spenser.

signifiers, creating a framework in which, as the Augustinian four-fold method of reading demonstrates, words and images can be read at multiple levels, and represent both things in themselves and also signs that represent something beyond them.²⁹ As such, theological concepts often require clusters of images to describe ineffable divine truths or the basics of religious thought and practice. This is particularly true of the theology of the Church – theologian Avery Dulles has codified this understanding into a method of analysis with which I align my work, and which categorizes different approaches to ecclesiology into five basic types or “models” of the Church's various functions as they are described in the Old and New Testaments. My dissertation questions what a community of believers looks like in the post-Reformation English Church, rather than about its institutional or political structure. I therefore rely specifically on the model he identifies as the “Mystical Community,” whose images he describes as expressions of *gemeinschaft*, or communal identity, rather than *gesellschaft*, or societal and institutional identity.³⁰ In light of this, I examine a number of theological images associated with the Church as they appear in these poems, on the understanding that they work as an interrelated cluster of images that represent the nature of the Church as Mystical Community.

In Chapter 1, before proceeding to Foxe’s work, I will trace how the concept of “church” developed into a comprehensive formal theme of redemptive purpose. Drawing on Scripture, early Elizabethan writings on the church, and the history and material culture of the Dissolution

²⁹. The Augustinian four-fold model was particularly relevant to Reformation writers, due to its influence on Calvin and his followers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-century Lyric* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 118; Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 168; R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Thought of Augustine* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1988); Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker House Books, 1988), 21; Ronald Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament* (Tyler TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1982), 27-39; Victor Harris, “Allegory to Analogy in the Interpretation of Scriptures,” *Philological Quarterly* 45:1 (1966), 1-23.

³⁰. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NJ: Image Books, 1987), 48. His other models of church function include the Church as Institution, Church as Sacrament, Church as Herald, and Church as Servant.

of the Monasteries in the 1530s, I will examine how images of churches as sites of resurrection developed through to the English Reformation. Then, I will read several of the major texts of the English Reformation before and during the Elizabethan Settlement – specifically the major liturgical texts such as the *Book of Common Prayer* (1559), the Elizabethan homilies (1562), and the 1570 edition of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*³¹ – to establish how resurrector church building imagery expresses the communal identity of the Protestant Church of England, and particularly how ruination, abolition, or destruction become positive means to redemptive Christian ends in the Church of England.³² Having established this foundation for reading “churches” in early modern English religion, I turn to the Introduction of Foxe’s 1570 edition of the *Actes and Monuments*, in which Foxe uses the language of church, building, and labor to establish his text’s purpose in creating a readerly community within the space of the text. In that space, the community of readers, subjects, and author labor together to revive the English Protestant cause in light of its recent persecutions under Mary I.

³¹ . Although first published in 1563, Foxe’s introduction to the 1570 edition is key to my reading of the text.

³² . I will be relying less on texts aligned with various theological “factions” within the English Church, and more on well-known examples of mainline moderate thought to show what was ideologically expected of English Protestants. These texts, according to Debora Shuger, show how the dominant early modern English ecclesiastic culture creates “interpretive categories and their internal relations, which underlie specific beliefs, ideas, and values,” including those that inform poetry (9). This approach is somewhat underrepresented in early modern literary studies, where “far more work has been done on Puritans and radicals than on the principal defenders of the Elizabethan Settlement and royal supremacy.” (3) I will also not be investing much, if any, time on early modern religious Polemics, anti-Catholic or anti-Puritan sentiment, questions of Puritan ambivalence towards art and images, cheap print and popular piety, or the many varied genres of non-canonical religious publications. These are, indeed, rich fields of study, and given the pervasive understanding of “church,” we can obviously trace its presence and function in these discourses, but this would require using historical modes of analyses that are more appropriate to these subjects but outside the purview of this dissertation’s goals. For just a small sampling of these subjects, see Lawrence Buck, *The Roman monster: an icon of the Papal Antichrist in Reformation polemics* (Kirkville MO: Truman State University Press, 2014); Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation* (Reading: University of Reading, 1986); Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2002); Roger Deakins, “The Tudor Prose Dialogue: Genre and Anti-Genre,” *SEL 1500-1900* 20:1 (1980), 5-23; Ernest Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation: Down Went Dagon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Peter Lake, *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

In Chapter 2, I examine how Edmund Spenser laments the death of Philip Sidney in “The Ruines of Time,” published in his *Complaints* (1591), by using the imagery of the Church Triumphant in Revelations. Situating this work in relationship to his earlier translations of du Bellay's *Ruins of Rome*, Van Der Noot's *Theater for Worldlings*, and their appearance in the *Complaints* as a whole, I argue that Spenser uses these ecclesiastical connotations to reconfigure the neo-platonic architectural imagery of the city of Rome. This reconfiguration provides a religious answer to the historical failures of Rome, and poses Sidney as the restored City of God in Revelations 22, which brings eternity into the present as the culmination of the apocalyptic destruction of the world and its subsequent rebirth. Through this imagery, Spenser claims to resurrect Sidney in poetry through the apocalyptic work that city does – and in building a relationship between his own speaker persona and Sidney as his subject, he gives renewed meaning and purpose to his own poetic endeavors.

In Chapter 3, I explore how Aemilia Lanyer figures her erstwhile patron, Margaret Clifford, the Countess of Cumberland, as “the True Bride of Christ,” an image used throughout the New Testament to describe the Church, in the *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611). She does this as an answer to Clifford’s notoriously awful husband, whose decision to exclude their daughter Anne from his will left her and Clifford without their expected inheritance. I argue that Clifford acts as a figural church around which other disenfranchised women might gather and gain sustenance in the book’s final poem, “The Description of Cookeham.” Despite being ostensibly the first country house poem in English, this poem is distinguished by a conspicuous lack of country house, representing their financial loss, and most of the narrative takes place on the paradisiacal grounds of the lost estate. Clifford's position as a church for disenfranchised women allows her to perform the function of the estate in caring for the tenants despite the loss

of the building, so that the figural church-building of the community she cares for thrives despite social and financial ruin. Lanyer then places herself in the midst of this poetic scene as one of Clifford's community, in the hopes of creating a relationship between herself and her potential patron that will sustain her own very real, financial misfortunes.

My fourth and final chapter revisits later iterations of church imagery in the poetry of George Herbert's *The Temple* (1633), in which Herbert turns his attention to himself as the object of rebuilding. I examine how Herbert associates his abilities as a poet with his spiritual holiness, and demonstrates that his sin mars his verse. Nevertheless, through language drawn from contemporary Laudian projects on beautifying churches, Herbert describes his heart as a church under renovation, whose reconstruction provides the space and pattern for God's presence to inhabit his life and, through it, his poetry. In the space of his poetry, Herbert then is able to accomplish the purpose of his poetic endeavors, which is to spread Christ's love to his readers. The language of church rebuilding shifts from descriptions of his heart to descriptions of his poetry, and that shift designates his poetry as a church-text where his readers might be edified and shaped, and then take the love of Christ to others in their words and deeds. In this, he is the end-point of this inquiry, and most concretely demonstrates the uses of church imagery as a figurative declaration of poetry's redemptive purposes.

CHAPTER 1

The English Church as Resurrection Space, the “Great Rebuilding,” and the Church of John Foxe

1. Introduction

Before exploring the church ruins that occupy the poetic landscape of later chapters, I must lay the historical and religious foundations for determining their meaning. This requires that we understand what churches mean and how they function, so that we can later make sense of what they signify in a state of collapse or ruin. In this first chapter, I identify a through-line from the Biblical sources of Protestant thought that influenced English Church practice and ecclesiology in the sixteenth century, to its effect on the English literary tradition. I consider conceptions of “church” as the site throughout the Old and New Testaments where the people of God meet and further the work of eternal redemption that for Christians begins with the Resurrection of Christ, and I explore its particular importance to early English Protestant identity at the beginnings of the Elizabethan Church. I argue for the centrality of the Resurrection to the narrative of the English Church’s institutional identity, and to demonstrate that the resurrective nature of the Church in the Biblical narrative was key to its sense of purpose. In so doing, I attempt to demonstrate that these church images in early modern English religion signify the paradoxical possibilities of eternal redemption through temporal collapse, and that the communal aspect of this activity explains how church images might facilitate a relationship in English poetic works between an author of a text and his or her subject and audience.

After exploring examples of this Resurrection-focused narrative in earlier Tudor English culture, I examine its manifestations in two of the most momentous cultural events in the early English Reformation: the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s, and the publication of the second edition of John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments of the English Church* (1570). While the

choice to pair these seemingly incongruous cultural moments may seem eccentric – especially given that neither is poetic, as are the rest of the texts examined in this dissertation – both of these moments are routinely cited as illustrative of early modern English conceptions of the emerging English Church's identity and mission.¹ More importantly, previous scholars have identified them as enormously influential on the literature and poetry of the later sixteenth century, because the doctrine and imagery with which they are associated were read and interpreted by writers of the English Renaissance well into the next century.²

My goal in these explorations is to provide some sense for why ruination imagery in later literature might be tied to English Protestant notions of how the Church is built through history. In both the Dissolution and Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, we find instantiations of loss and trauma that seem to threaten the very act of building the English Protestant Church. But when read in the context of the redemptive arc of Christian history in Scripture, from whence these two events derive their language, we see, in fact, that the trauma of destruction is necessary for growth in a narrative that understands the devastation of the cross as the prerequisite for Christ's resurrective triumph. I do not, however, read these texts in historical order. As Christopher Haigh describes the progress of the Reformation, “such events did not come in swift and orderly sequence, as consecutive steps of a pre-planned program or a protest movement; they came (and went again) as the accidents of everyday politics and the consequences of power struggles.”³ Its most evident moment of consolidation, the Elizabethan Settlement starting in 1559, was by its

¹. John Foxe and the English Reformation, ed. David Loades, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997); Margaret Aston, “English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtland Institutes*, Vol 36 (1973), 231-255.

². John King, *English Reformation Literature*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³. Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 13.

very nature an act of recreation through the compromising middle way of a church that expressed Protestant theology through some Catholic practice and ceremony. This meant enacting a process of institutional building that was creative, transformative, sometimes looking forwards, and sometimes backwards, to redesign a uniquely English Protestant Church that used fragments of the past to build toward future wholeness. For that reason, though this chapter centers on the Elizabethan Settlement as the impetus for this theme's importance and literary legacy, I also move forwards and backwards, both before and after the Settlement, in order to set up the cultural conversation as the backdrop against which later poets worked.

In both Henry VIII's description of his Dissolution of the monastic houses, and in the material outcome of the Dissolution, we see a manifestation of the paradoxically productive deployment of destruction for furthering the work of building up the Church. And in Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, we see a Protestant reading of the English Church as a people marked for redemption through destruction. We also find a potential clue as to how that conception of the Church transforms into literary terms, as Foxe uses church imagery to describe his own text, and the relationship among himself, the characters of the martyrs he depicts, and his readers as a church community that builds itself up in the acts of reading and writing.

2. The Redemptive-Historical Narrative and the English Church

While the theology of the Resurrection has always been a central part of the Christian tradition, the renewed emphasis on reading the Bible in the Reformation revived interest in its central place in the overarching narrative of Scripture. Theologian Michael Horton has described John Calvin's approach to the Biblical narrative, as it is illustrated particularly in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), as a “redemptive-historical” hermeneutic in which creation-wide

redemption at the end of Christian history determines the significance of each event in the narrative.⁴ But what is less well-established about this Biblical narrative is the extent to which its drama unfolds within the space that eventually becomes known as “the Church,” and how the church space becomes associated with restoring communion between God and man, particularly in moments of the story when it mimics the Resurrection by being rebuilt through destruction.⁵

In the Old Testament, God designates Israel as his people. God's purpose for Israel, in the reading of later Christian theologians, is to re-establish the promised salvific connection between humanity and God that was lost at the Fall, through the founding of a nation marked as “his.”⁶ These promises primarily refer to what later Old Testament prophets would identify as the

⁴ . He goes on to say, “For the Reformers, the Old Testament was as much the church's canon as the New, and both formed a single play with an intermission, a drama whose leading character was Jesus Christ.” (151) Calvin once described the effects of this approach to Scripture by saying: “Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge. Peabody MA: Hendrickson Press (2008), 15). Calvin's framework, however, was originally developed by early Christians (largely in response to persecution) who “appealed to Scripture and theology as a history of redemption” following a “promise-fulfillment hermeneutic” which gave “renewed focus” to “the unity of Scripture around Christ and redemption, a fresh interest in history as the locus of redemption and revelation.” *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama*. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002), (5). See also Barbara Lewalski's description of the various Reformed hermeneutical traditions that sprang from Calvinism in her chapter on “Typology and the Religious Lyric” in *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 111-144.

⁵ . Specifically, that narrative produces the concept through the set of Biblical images identified by Avery Dulles as those that “harmonize” the relationship between the Body of Christ –the focal point of the Resurrection– and the People of God in the tradition of the Church as Mystical Community who receives that salvation (Dulles, 50).

⁶ . Alister McGrath. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 387. God first promises Abram, through whom the people of Israel is born, to use his descendants to bless the whole world, as He will “make of thee a great nation, and will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. I will also bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Genesis 12:2-3. In Genesis 17: 2-9 God also renames Abram as Abraham, the “Father of many nations.” (All references to Bible in this chapter are to the *Geneva Bible (1560)*, trans. Lloyd E. Berry. (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Press, 2007.)

Messianic Redeemer, who will come to save Israel and, through Israel, “bless” all the earth.⁷ But they also refer, more generally, to the people from whom the Messiah will spring – the people of God.⁸ The primary meeting space in which this relationship functions is the Temple, and God is understood to have dwelt with his people there.⁹ The Temple is thus both the location of God's presence and also a representation of the promise of redemption through the relationship between God and his people.¹⁰

When, in the Gospels, Jesus describes his Messianic mission and purpose, he poses them in “Temple” terms that furnish a fuller illustration of the work of salvation. According to Ben Meyer, Jesus deployed a specific Jewish trope of the promised Messiah as the “Master Builder/Artisan of the House of God.”¹¹ But Jesus shifts the terms of engagement with Temple language, in that Christ intentionally inflicts destruction on that Temple – both literally and figuratively – in order to rebuild it. In Jesus' cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus drives the moneychangers from the courtyard of the Temple while shouting “make not my father's house a house of merchandise.” He then says of the Temple that he “will destroy the Temple,

⁷. Although the belief that Christ fulfills that role of Messianic Redeemer in a spiritual, universal rather than political sense may be, according to some scholars, a post-Biblical belief. See the entry on “Messiah” in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* Vol. 11, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 1411.

⁸. This blessing happens through the establishment of a relationship, both individual and collective, between God and Israel, established through the Mosaic Covenant, in which God promises that “if ye wil heare my voyce in ded, & kepe my couenat, then ye shalbe my chief treasure above all people, thogh all the earth be min. Ye shalbe vnto me also a kingedome of Priestes, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speake vntuo the children of Israel.” (Exodus 19:5-6).

⁹. Margaret Barker claims that “an appearance of the Lord was the prerequisite for any Holy Place” in Jewish thought. *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem*. (London: SPCK, 1991), 17.

¹⁰. Once the nation of Israel is established in the Promised Land, Solomon, the son of David, constructs a temple in Jerusalem to house the Ark in 957 BCE, to which God responds “coercing this house which thou buyldest, if thou wilt walke in mine ordinaces and execute my iudgements, and kepe all my commandements, to walke in them, then wil I performe vnto thee my promes, which I promised to David thy father. And I wil dwel among the children of Israel and wil not forsake my people Israel. So Salomon buylt the house and finished it” (1 Kings 6:12-14).

¹¹. *Christus Faber: The Master Builder and the House of God*. (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1992), 1. See also John Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

and I will rebuild it in three days” – a statement that John clarifies with the explanation that “he spake of the Temple of His body.”¹² By saying he will destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, Jesus implies, for both physical and figural Temples, that this destruction cleanses the corruption of God's meeting space. In this sense, the destruction of Christ's mortal, physical body signifies the triumph of death, while its resurrection three days later signals his triumph *over* death.¹³

Christ's death and resurrection creates a paradoxical space in history where the temporal world has been interrupted by the eternal reality of redemption that will not be complete until the end of time. Michael Horton describes this as a state in which “the future is semi-realized in the present.”¹⁴ The Resurrection is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about Israel's role in God's redemptive plans for the world, but the Resurrection is also the beginning of a complete restoration that is not finished until the Second Coming. The placement of the Resurrection at the center of this ambiguous eschatological horizon creates what Horton calls an “already-not yet dialectic” in Christian history, whereby Christ's resurrection both fulfills and promises fulfillment of prophesied redemption in the “organic unfolding of the divine plan.”¹⁵

The ambiguous historical space created by the Resurrection is located in the Church. Paul in Corinthians and elsewhere describes the Church in redemptive-historical terms, as even the word he uses for church – *ecclesia* – is an eschatological word meant to indicate an in-between

¹². In fact, this is the claim that, according to the Gospels, led to his condemnation by the Sanhedrin. See John 2:19, Matthew 26:61, Mark 14:58. Jesus also, earlier in his time in Jerusalem, quotes Psalm 118:22-23 at his critics: “The stone which the buylders refused, is the head of the corner. This was the Lords doing, & it is maruelous in our eyes.” As the *Geneva Bible* (1560) glossed this verse, “Christ's body might justly be called the Temple, because the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in it corporally.”

¹³. Much of this has been described Christologically as the theology of salvation known, as McGrath describes it, as the “Cross as Victory” (395).

¹⁴. *Covenant and Eschatology*, 2.

¹⁵. *Ibid*, 2-5.

state that promises fulfillment more than it gives fulfillment.¹⁶ After his resurrection, and in his promise to leave work behind for his followers, Jesus re-establishes his people in the Church as the “new Israel.”¹⁷ As this demonstrates, the Church takes its sense of identity explicitly from the messianic mission of Christ's role as “master builder” of the house of God, and God positions it in history so that it both fulfills the function of the Old Testament Temple and, also, works toward complete redemption at the end of time.¹⁸ The Church, therefore, is a promise of redemption that exists between the Resurrection and the Second Coming, in the middle of the already-not yet dialectic.

As an expression of that promise, the Church incorporates the function of the two images most associated with the Resurrection's salvific meaning – Christ's Body and the Temple – into its sense of purpose. Church tradition holds that the individuals in community *become* the Body of Christ on earth in its state as the “mystical community.” Paul makes it clear to his followers in 1 Corinthians that “Ye now are the body of Christ,” and that “as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, which is one, though they be many, *yet* are *but* one body: even so is Christ.”¹⁹ Paul also expresses this definition of the Church's identity in the

¹⁶. According to Avery Dulles, “in the Pauline letters, the Church is the Temple that will be completed and consecrated at the end of history. It is also the Body of Christ, still growing up into him who is the head, Jesus Christ (Eph 4:15) ... The mystical communion of men with one another in Christ is something that begins on earth and is consummated in heaven ... many of the Biblical authors see the Church within history as a foretaste or anticipation of what the Church is to be. Paul sees it as a temple still in the process of being built, a body still growing into mature manhood. The Apocalypse sees at the end of history the marriage of the Lamb ... The Church on earth, according to this ecclesiology, is not merely a promise or pledge of the heavenly Church, but is an anticipation of it ... Throughout the Patristic period, Christian preachers and theologians looked upon the Church as the communion of saints that exists imperfectly here on earth and perfectly in the blessed in Heaven” (*Models of the Church*. (Garden City, NJ: Image Books, 1987), 104-111).

¹⁷. Matthew 16:18. Peter means “the Rock” in Greek. This may also be a reference to Mt. Sinai.

¹⁸. Horton states that “through its ministration, the new age occupies a foothold in this world.” (7).

¹⁹. I Corinthians 12: 12-27. See also 2 Timothy 2:11-13: “*It is* a true saying, For if we be dead together *with him*: we also shall live *with him*. If we suffer, we shall also reign *with him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us. If we beleue not, *yet* abideth he faithful: he cannot deny himself.” Ben Meyer claims that the Old Testament Temple is central to

parallel conception of believers as “Temples of the Holy Spirit,” an image meant to remind Christians that they in their own bodies now are spaces where God meets them through the redeeming work of Christ.²⁰

But the Church's status between the Resurrection and the Second Coming means that this community is a structure still in the process of being formed in the temporal world where sin, death, destruction, and misfortune still reign – for which reason the trope of building becomes necessary to defining its mission. When Paul tells the Corinthians that they are all members of the Body of Christ, he also exhorts them to use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of others, so “that the Church may receive edification.”²¹ The verb “to edify” in Greek is *oikodomeo*, or “to build a house” – later translated into the Latin by Jerome in the Vulgate as *aedificare*, to build. So the image we have of the Church is as a body, which is also a Temple – the house of the Lord – that is *in the process of being* built. And importantly, that building work is a collective activity – each member *edifies* others as others edify him through multiple activities that bring all

Christian identity because the church takes its sense of identity explicitly from this messianic mission of Christ's identity (*Christus Faber*, 217). See Dulles, 110. Luther figures it as a figural taking on of the body of Christ: “But we must as well wrap Christ, and know him to be wrapped, in our sins, our malediction, our death, and all our evils, as he is wrapped in our flesh and blood.” (*Commentary on Galatians*, 135). Calvin, in his ecclesiological definition of this “True” church in the *Institutes*, looks to Corinthians' description of the Church as Christ's body, saying “All the elect of God are so joined together in Christ, that as they depend on one head, so they are as it were compacted into one body, being knit together in its different members, made truly one by living together under the same Spirit of God in one faith, hope, and charity.” By aligning his own church with the church of Corinthians, he rhetorically joins this Christian community with the ambiguous church space that encompasses past and future within its moment in the present, as “it not only comprehends the saints who dwell on the earth, but all the elect who have existed from the beginning of the world.” (*Institutes*, 673). He also likes the expression “communion of saints,” for this clause, though usually omitted by ancient writers, must not be overlooked, as it admirably expresses the quality of the church just as if it had been said, that saints are united in the fellowship of Christ on this condition, that all the blessings which God bestows upon them are mutually communicated each to the other” (677).

²⁰. Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. (Louisville KY: John Knox Press, 2004), 233. See 1 Corinthians 6:19.

²¹. 1 Corinthians 4:5. Paul is speaking here in particular of those who have the gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues (and interpretation), and teaching. He makes similar statements about the need to edify one another in 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Romans 14:19.

together in unity.²² And the activity of communal, relational edification of the Church is not accomplished in a single instance, but is an activity of continued redemption.²³

At the end of this historical narrative in Revelation, moreover, the building and the body images come together and morph to signify that the work of restoration is finished.²⁴

Specifically, in Revelation 19: 7-8, the Church is personified as the “true bride of the Lamb,” and a voice cries out “Let vs be glad and reioyce, and giue glory to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made her self readie.” The image of a marriage, conceived of in the Christian tradition as the unification of two bodies into one, provides a solid illustration of the concept of Christ's Body being mystically unified through the many bodies within the church, building each other up toward wholeness.²⁵ Bodies have transcended buildings, in this vision, and the Temple passes away to make room for its fulfilled person in the corporeal relationship between Christ and his bride, the Church.

The redemptive-historical arc of Scripture provides the stock imagery and theological explanation by which different instantiations and communities of Christians in history have

²². Later Calvinist traditions – particularly the burgeoning “Puritan” movement in England during the 1570's – will use this early Calvinist situating of the Church as part of further reforms in the Protestant Church, relying on the Pauline notion of “edification” to critique what they saw as faulty Catholic doctrine in the English Church. See John Coolidge's argument on edification in *The Pauline Renaissance in England: Puritanism and the Bible*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

²³. As the later twentieth century theologian Karl Barth described this key belief in the Reformed tradition, the Church is, in a tellingly gerundive construction, “always being reformed” (*Ecclesia semper reformanda est*). Theodor Mahlmann: “*Ecclesia semper reformanda*”. *Eine historische Aufarbeitung. Neue Bearbeitung*, in: Torbjörn Johansson, Robert Kolb, Johann Anselm Steiger (Hrsg.): *Hermeneutica Sacra. Studien zur Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, (Berlin - New York, 2010), 382-441, here 384-388. See also Walter Lowe, who identifies this as a by-product of Trinitarian theology (“Christ and Salvation,” *Christian Theology: An Introduction to its Tradition and Tasks*, eds. P. Hodgson & R. King. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1998), 223-47.

²⁴. I will be discussing segments of Revelation in more depth in Chapter 2. Revelation imagery also make notable appearances in Aemilia Lanyer's poetry.

²⁵. This image also extends the marriage imagery reflected in the original Mosaic covenant, where God promises to be Israel's God as they are his people (Exodus 19:34), which becomes a major theme in the prophets as God chastises Israel as if chastising an adulterous spouse (even demanding that the prophet Hosea marry a prostitute to symbolize God's broken marriage with Israel).

identified themselves as a religion and community. That is to say, the Temple space, the mystical Body of Christ, and the Resurrection all become ways of talking about what Christians see as their purpose on earth, as the imagery of building and bodies work together to constitute the people of God. I will now examine how these archetypal images and concepts find expression historically in the English Reformation.

In the sixteenth century, those who wrote the seminal texts that defined the English Church understood themselves and their ecclesiology as occupying a key moment in this redemptive-historical narrative, and understood their physical churches as part of that redemptive work. Three such writers, John Foxe, John Jewel, and James Pilkington, were Protestant divines who had fled to France during the Marian Exile and, upon their return, wrote texts that became seminal works by which Elizabeth I defined her ecclesiastical polity and positions. Their works therefore serve as useful representations of how the official Church of England was understood and defined under Elizabeth's rule. In these texts, we see a through-line from the spiritual building of believers as a community, to the building up of a physical space for that community, to the building up of the institution as the new people of God. The common thread is the church building as a space of holiness and redemptive power, and this imagery shapes the English Church in its institution, doctrine, and practice.

This theological understanding was expressed in the renewed interest in the apocalyptic narrative of Revelation.²⁶ English reformers favored Millenarian interpretations of Revelation, or interpretations that focused on the end of time, which was thought to be heralded by a thousand-year period of apocalyptic trials and tribulations. Millenarianism's emphasis falls upon its conclusion: Richard Helgerson characterizes early modern apocalypics as the belief that "the

²⁶. According to David Norbrook, this was an effect of the Reformation's emphasis on reading the Bible, as their "Protestant exegesis opened the way for a conception of the incarnation as operating in a linear, progressive manner." Was a shift from Medieval period: "as opposed to the medieval conception of a vertical hierarchical cosmos of gradated images and shadows." (*Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*. (Boston: Routledge, 1984), 39-40).

long-expected consummation will come only with the end of time.”²⁷ Because of this, some scholars read early modern understandings of Revelation in wholly catastrophic terms. Andrew Escobedo, for instance, characterizes the mood as one of “postmillennial foreclosure,” which “fuels the desire for a glorious English future, but the expectation of an imminent, earth-destroyed Apocalypse closes off the national future.”²⁸

But according to Orson Palles, the end of history was anticipated as a joyful event, and in the sixteenth century English Church, “the term millenarian is understood to cover any belief in an ideal, this-worldly, future, penultimate and collective state of felicity, regardless of duration.”²⁹ The cause of that joyful interpretation is its fulfillment of the Resurrection and its glorification of the Church as the conduit and recipient of Christ’s redemption. One of John Foxe’s early works is a Latin comedy entitled *Christus Triumphans* (1556), which depicts “the persecutions of Ecclesia, with which that unhappy old devil, from the time he was driven from heaven by Christ, never stopped harassing the Bride of Christ.”³⁰ Foxe, who at the time was in exile in Geneva, writes to encourage persecuted English Protestants, whom he sees as the true “Ecclesia,” to maintain faith because the fulfillment of Christ’s promise is at hand. The Resurrection story is central to the play’s narrative structure. The play starts with the effects of the Fall being elided with consequences of the Resurrection. Eve encounters Mary bewailing the death of her son Jesus on the Cross, and compares Mary’s loss with her own grief over the death

²⁷. *Forms of Nationhood*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 256.

²⁸. *Nationalism and Historical Loss in Renaissance England: Foxe, Dee, Spenser, Milton*. (Ithaca: University Press, 2004), 22. I will examine Millenarian interpretations and Escobedo’s argument more fully in my Chapter 2.

²⁹. “Was John Foxe a Millenarian?” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 45. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 600-625. 623.

³⁰. *Two Latin Comedies by John Foxe the Martyrologist*, ed. John Hazel Smith. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 213.

of her daughter Psyche (the human soul) after Eve ate the apple and introduced sin and death to her children. Mary responds with hope for both their children:

Mary: I'm very sorry for them both. But isn't there any ray of help shining?

Eve: None but that which shines for everyone.

Mary: What's that?

Eve: For the afflicted, an enemy's pain is a remedy of one's own pain.

Mary: What does that mean?

Eve: It will come to pass from heaven, as I once heard, that the hellish head of this serpent will be trodden down.

Mary: How, pray tell?

Eve: From the seed of a woman, it was said.

Mary: How I'd like to be that woman!³¹

Eve and Mary's presence together on the same stage draws a parallel between the beginning and middle of the redemptive story: Eve, the cause of sin, Mary's son Jesus, its solution. Eve alludes to God's promise in Genesis that though God puts "enmitie between thee and the woman and between thy sede and her sede ... He shal breake thine head, and thou shalt bruise his heele."³² This divine proclamation prophecies Christ's death and resurrection: though the serpent (Satan) "bruises" the heel of Eve's "sede," the promised Messiah born of woman, in death, the Messiah will "crush" Satan, and therefore death and sin, through resurrection. Mary's ironic declaration that she would "like to be that woman" reminds the audience that this prophecy is fulfilled in her own "seed," Christ. Their parallel grief demonstrates that Eve's sorrow is redeemed by Mary's, as the latter death rectifies the former.

The Resurrection is then re-enacted multiple times over the course of the play. At first, that re-enactment occurs allegorically: Eve's children are Soma and Psyche (Body and Soul), held captive by Satan after the Fall. Christ enters the stage "resurrected, leading in Psyche" in Act I.4, thus rescuing Psyche and Soma from hell, redeeming the Body by his resurrection by proclaiming "I will be your

³¹. Ibid., 241.

³². Genesis 2:15.

death, oh Death, and your sting, oh hell.”³³ The Resurrection appears again at multiple points to ensure the progress of the Church in history. For the Body (Soma) is married to the Church (Ecclesia), who gives birth to the world (Europus and Africus). Throughout the second part of the play, Ecclesia simultaneously experiences the Resurrection in the present while also hoping for it in the future: In Act III, while experiencing persecution in the allegorical city of Pornapolis, she declares that “Now both my father and my mother have ended their days. That was quite painful to me for a while, but now it is less so, since they will rise again to life by the right of [postliminium], as Christ and the Scriptures assure me.”³⁴ This indicates that she looks forward to the redemptive hope of the end times. But in the midst of her persecutions, one of her accusers, Thanatus, claims to see the risen Christ wearing a white robe that says “Death is swallowed up in victory” standing next to Psyche.³⁵ This vision happens in the present moment, and could be a vision of Christ after his earthly death and resurrection. But the appearance of Psyche, for whom Ecclesia had previously only expressed hope of seeing again in the future, suggests that this is also a harbinger of Christ’s Second Coming, breaking in from the future to the present to set things right. Christ’s death and resurrection thus redeems the story from multiple moments in the narrative, and creates a sense of perpetual resurrection in scenes that start with death and destruction.

The narrative also demonstrates the hope that arises out of persecution for those in the midst of it. For Foxe, the key to Revelation is not the end of time and the oblivion of death but the Triumph of Christ – the work is, after all, a comedy, and therefore must end happily. The play leaves its characters at the moment right before the wedding of the Church and the Lamb from Revelation 21, as Ecclesia’s sons says “I see clearly now, even to this sentence: ‘I saw the new Jerusalem descending from heaven,

³³ . *Triumphans*, 249.

³⁴ . *Ibid.*, 273.

³⁵ . *Ibid.*, 283.

prepared by God as a bride adorned for her husband.”³⁶ At this point, the chorus of virgins positions the audience with them, and says “Spectators, now you see the bridge decked out and all things in readiness. Nothing remains except the bridegroom himself, who will bring the final catastrophe to our stage.”³⁷ The play ends in a way that leaves the audience literally at the very cusp of the “already-but not yet” manifestation of final redemption – at the exact moment when the tension is about to resolve. And that conclusion is a joyful one: in the sixteenth century, “catastrophe” simply means the denouement, and does not carry the destructive connotations that later centuries would give it. The audience can therefore look forward to the “catastrophe” brought by Christ without fear or trepidation.

Foxe assumes that this impending triumph was real, not allegorical, and that it would occur in only a matter of time. Not only that, but he assumed that the English Church of his time would take part in that narrative. Throughout the play, Foxe brings the audience into the narrative as characters, addressing them directly. In his dedicatory epistle, Foxe expresses a longing that “perhaps it will not be long before stage representations will lie neglected; then indeed we will see all with our own eyes, when God sends in actual fact what he now only promises,”³⁸ Foxe believes that the narrative will leave its “stage representation” behind, moving out of the world of art and into the world of the present. That he refers to both himself and the audience as “us” suggests that they are both part of the larger narrative represented here. And that narrative is not allegorical, but real, as he places himself and the audience in a state of hopefulness for the true end of the play. In the prefatory letter to the reader, Foxe’s friend Laurence Humphrey cries: “Would that the same Christ Triumphant might come to us all, not in the theater but in the clouds, not in allegorical representation but in the conspicuous majesty of his father, visible to all. Perhaps it will not be long delayed, though how quickly he will come is not for us a matter

³⁶. Ibid., 365.

³⁷. Ibid., 371.

³⁸. Ibid., 271.

of certitude. I would assuredly have said that the state of human affairs is now so fallen that he could never come more opportunely.”³⁹ This demonstrates the extent to which the Apocalypse, though it manifests in the “fallen” state of religious discord in England, was not a figure of dread but of great joy and hope. In its final epithalamium, the chorus exhorts Christ the “Bridegroom” to “remember us and let your majesty break through the clouds, grant your people that peace will return as you return.”⁴⁰

England, the Bride who waits for her marriage to the Lamb, is hopeful of peace and triumph, not death and oblivion. From Foxe’s work, it is clear that for the English Protestants of this time, this triumphant arc of the Apocalypse was foremost in their reading of Revelation, and central to their understanding of their Protestant identity.

The triumphant depiction of the English Church in redemptive history allowed Foxe and his contemporaries to claim the mantle of God’s elect or chosen people, as English Protestants in the mid-sixteenth century saw themselves as the “true Israel.” This was particularly true of the Genevan exiles, who used their self-identification as Israel to explain and resist their persecutions during the Marian regime. The frontispiece of the *Geneva Bible* (1560), for example, depicts the Israelites crossing the Red Sea to escape Pharaoh, in an attempt to draw a parallel between Israel and their own flight across the English Channel to escape Mary.⁴¹ From this self-identification, they justified themselves as God’s “elect” nation, tasked with bringing God’s reign to earth.⁴²

They did this by reading backwards from Revelation, posing the Catholic Church as the “false” Church of Revelation, and themselves, the persecuted minority, whose return to the right administration

³⁹ . Ibid., 206.

⁴⁰ . Ibid., 367.

⁴¹ . See Figure A.

⁴² . William Haller, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 80.

of word and sacrament mark them as the “true” Church.⁴³ The early Protestant writer John Bale railed against the Roman Catholic Church, proclaiming in his polemical *Image of Both Churches* (1546) that “either we are citizens in the New Jerusalem with Jesus Christ, or else, in the superstitious Babylon with Antichrist the Vicar of Satan.”⁴⁴ The Roman Catholic Church was presented as an aberration in Christian history, and a corruption of the true Church. *The Thirty-Nine Articles* (1563), the most definitive explication of the doctrine of the English Church, claims that “As the church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred; so also the church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith” (64).⁴⁵ This conception elides Catholicism and Judaism, since the “church of Rome” errs just as the “church of Jerusalem” did, so that though the English Church borrows its designation of itself as the people of God from the Jews, it also distances itself from them.

The English Church was a correction, and a re-institution of God’s people. In his seminal 1562 *Apologie of the Church of England*, John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, makes the case for the English Church as a purification of that which had become corrupt. He describes the Catholic Church by saying

The silver of Goddes people (that is of the Church) was become Drosse: and that the same Citie which a foretime had ben faithful, was now become an harlot, and that in ye same was no part sound thoroughout the whol body from the head to the fote? Or els when Christ him selfe sayde, that the house of God was made by ye Pharasies and Preistes a Denne of theues? Of a trouth, the Church euen as a cornefyld except it be ared, manured, tilled & trimmed in stede of wheate, it wil bring furthe thystles, darnell and nettiles. For this cause did God send euer among both Prophettes & Apostles, & last of al his own Son, who might bring home the people into the right waye, and repayre a new, the tottering Church after she had erred.⁴⁶

⁴³. *Institutes*, 679.

⁴⁴. *The Image of Both Churches* (1545), ed. Gretchen Minton. (New York: Springer Press, 2013), 37.

⁴⁵. “19. Of the Church,” quoted in *Religion and Society in Early Modern England*, ed. David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 64

⁴⁶. trans. Ann Cooke. (London: Printed by James Roberts, 1600). Note that Jewel nevertheless sees England as part of larger Church of Christendom, just also localized the elect: “Wee beleue that there is one Church of God, and that the same is not shutte vp (as in times past amonge the Iewes) into some one corner or kyngdome, but that it is catholique and vniuersall, and

Jewel alludes to many images used by Christ and others in the New Testament to describe the people and kingdom of God – the city, a body, a field to be tilled – to describe a church that had lost its way.⁴⁷ Indeed, he specifically refers to Christ's driving out of the moneychangers from the Temple, indicating that he understands the Church to be part of the larger work Christ does to redeem destruction through resurrection.

Within this extended work with the imagery of the Temple, the work of the Elect to purify the Church from corruption takes on architectural overtones as a rebuilding or repairing of the Temple. Jewel poses the establishment of the English Church under Elizabeth as the work of Christ to “repayre” a “tottering” church, which will “bring home” the true people of God into a new, purified Temple. This architectural metaphor persists in later works by Jewel, suggesting that he sees the institution of the English Church under Elizabeth as a God-ordained rebuilding of the true Church, to facilitate its progress towards its final redemption. In a later sermon, Jewel reiterates that “the Church hath byn defaced with abuses: let vs giue God thanks, that of his great mercies hath restored it, and let us euery man endeuour to reediffe it ... Some other there be that see and knowe, that the Church of God is nowe a building, and yet not onely refraine themselues from the worke, but also spurne down that other men haue built vp.”⁴⁸ The Church in England is described in architectural terms as a building that has been “defaced” by Catholic corruptions, inscribing the reform movement within a metaphorical structure associated with the redemptive work of God. Contemporary attempts to reform it through doctrine and

dispersed throughout the whole worlde. So that there is now no nation which can truly complaine that they bee shutt furth. & maye not be one of ye Church & people of God: And that this Churche is the Kingedome, the bodye and the spouse of Christe: and that Christ alone is the Prince of thys Kyngedome, that Christ alone is the heade of this bodye, and that Christ alone is the brydgrome of this spouse” (9).

⁴⁷. The kingdom of God is portrayed as a city most notably in the Book of Revelation; see Chapter 2 for more. The people of God are portrayed as a body in 1 Corinthians 12:27, and as a field in Jesus' parables (see for example the Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:1-23).

⁴⁸. *Apologie*, 30-34.

practice are “reedifying” that building, so that it is “built up” and repaired to its proper purpose.⁴⁹

Repairing church buildings to vouchsafe the work of God within his people was not, moreover, merely metaphorical. In his 1571 addition to the official *Book of Homilies* for English clergy, Jewel demonstrates that the actual, physical reparations of churches that had fallen into disrepair prior to Elizabeth’s reign was understood to be vital to the work of rebuilding the Church as an institution. In “On Repairing and Keeping Clean the Church,” Jewel argues that the church building is the physical manifestation and continuation of the Temple. God wants stories of the Temple’s building and destruction known because “these Histories touching the reedifying and repayring of his holy Temple, should be written at large, to the end wee should be taught thereby” that “GOD will haue his Temple, his Church, the place where his Congregation shall resort to magnifie him, well edified, well repaired, and well maintained.”⁵⁰ Like the Temple, the building is important and should be cared for because its purpose is to bring man and God together. The church should be repaired and maintained because “the Church or Temple is counted and called holy, yet not of it selfe, but because GODS people resorting thereunto, are holy, and exercise themselues in holy and heauenly things.” Specifically,

First, that our Churches are not destitute of promises, forasmuch as our Sauour Christ saith, Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst among them. A great number therefore comming to Church together in the Name of Christ, haue there, that is to say in the Church, their GOD and Sauour Christ Iesus present among the Congregation of his faithfull people, by his grace, by his fauour and godly assistance, according to his most assured and comfortable promises. Why then ought not Christian people to build them Temples and Churches, hauing as great promises of the presence of GOD, as euer had Salomon for the materiall Temple which hee did build?⁵¹

⁴⁹. He also sees this as part of the redemptive narrative, as God acts to re-edify the people whenever corruption overgrows them: “In the meane season let vs remember, that in the olde Lawe, whensoever the Byshoppe grewe out of order, God raysed vp sometimes Prophetes, sometimes Princes, to refourme the church, to redresse things that were amisse, and to reedifie the decayes” (33).

⁵⁰. *Certaine sermons or homilies appointed to be read in churches. In the time of the late Queene Elizabeth of famous memory*. (London: Ralph Hodgkinson and John Norton, 1640) 77.

⁵¹. Ibid.

The comparison Jewel draws between the repairing of church buildings to the “materiall Temple” of Solomon suggests that physical reparations are a way of re-connecting, or re-manifesting, the Temple as it originally was, and should have been: the place that Solomon built to glorify God. This is because reparations of the space bring back the presence of God. The church building is where the people of God “gather,” and therefore transitively where Christ is “in the midst of them.” It is the place where God’s presence might be brought to earth through the community of believers.

To repair the church in physical form, then, is to rebuild the Church in communal form. For the physical church supports the institutional Church in repairing and redeeming each believer so that they might join the people of God. Even in this regard, the metaphor of building and repairing is used to describe the work of shaping God’s people. In his Biblical commentary *Aggeus the Prophet* (1560), Protestant divine James Pilkington turns the physical work into spiritual work, saying “the house of God nowe for vs left buylde: is sometime called in Scripture generally the whole company of Christians, and sometime euery particular man.”⁵² His elision between the “whole company” of the Church and “every particular man” suggests that to build the community, the church must build up each believer in their own faith. Each individual is brought into the community through both others’ care of him and his care of others: “This is that whiche saint Paule calles so often edifynge or buyldinge one an other, and that edification whiche he speakes so much of in all his Epistles, that is as much to saye as one to sturre vp an other to vertue and godlines. For as the buyldinge goes forward and encreases by laying to one stone after an other, and one poste or tree after an other, vntill the house be finished: So we by goinge forward dayly in the feare of God and godlines, shal at lengthe bee meete house for God too dwell in.”⁵³ Each believer, like a stone,⁵⁴ is built and edified to join the building as a whole. To care for the

⁵². *Aggeus the prophete declared by a large commentary J.P.L.C.*, (London: Wylllyam Seres, 1560), Fi.

⁵³. *Ibid.*, Fi.

spiritual development of one believer – the “stirring up” of “virtue and godliness” – constitutes a labor for the whole Church.

3. Monasteries and Material Culture in the Early English Reformation

Thus far I have explored the Scriptural development of the concept of “Church” as the mediating, temporally ambiguous space where new life arises from destruction, and examined its significance to the English Church under Elizabeth. In this segment, I turn to an earlier moment under Henry VIII for a cultural case study: an exploration of how this conception of church illuminates the English Reformation as a reformulation of corporate Christian religion, illustrated most vividly by the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530's – an event that scholars have argued is a significant repository of ruins imagery for later poets. While accounts of Reformation history focus on specific areas of dispute such as doctrine, political authority, social and economic influences, or ceremony and practice in the transition from Catholic to Protestant theology, according to Geddes Macgregor “the Reformation was about the nature of the church more than it was about justification or grace.”⁵⁵ Thinking about these other controversies as discussions about how to shape the church-as-community gives us a more holistic picture of their genesis and purpose. For what are each of these doctrinal disagreements about, if not about how the mystical communion of saints should look and act in history?

⁵⁴. He takes this image from Scripture itself: “And saint Peter saieth: ye are buylt like liuely stones for a spirituall house of God. This spiritual house muste be diligently buylded of vs, and the buyldinge of thys house of wood and stone amonge the Iewes, was a figure of this spiritual house buyldinge for oure dayes” (F.i.).

⁵⁵. Quoted in Hodgson, *Christian Theology*, 230. See also John McNeil, who claims that one of the aims of the Reformation was to “reshape the corporate forms of religion” (“The Church in Sixteenth Century Reformed Theology,” *Journal of Religion*, 22:3 (1942), 251-269). See also Paul Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981).

In the English Reformation in particular, this conversation revolves around the messy break with Roman Catholicism, a defining event for which the church tradition of rebuilding out of destruction seems a particularly apt description of events. Henry VIII's complicated separation from the Church of Rome was a primarily political move designed to allow him to retain the ceremonies of Catholic tradition within the newly-formed, Protestant-leaning English Church. Up to this point, I have been examining images of church buildings as metaphorical themes that linguistically convey the nature of the church community. But what if we extend this principle to a reading of the physical church buildings themselves as signifiers of Post-Reformation Christian identity? Churches, as a rule, are designed as spaces that aesthetically – and didactically – represent aspects of the mystical relationship between God and his people, so that “entering a church is a metaphor for entering into a spiritual process,” meant to inspire meditation on Christian truths.⁵⁶ Because of this, we can often read their meaning as signifiers of those truths; indeed, as studies in cultural materialism have shown us, it is that buildings, as repositories of cultural value, can be read for meaning in ways analogous to texts.⁵⁷ Anne Myers argues that, particularly for the early modern period, the relation between architectural structures and literary

⁵⁶. Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21. This is particularly true in the Christian tradition and in physical Christian objects, in which since Augustine the sign of a religious truth always both signifies a higher meaning and manifests it palpably, so that physical objects and tangible liturgical movements act as “visible signs of invisible grace.” See Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D.W. Robertson. (New Jersey: Macmillan Press, 1997). For more on Augustine's typographical hermeneutic, see R.A. Markus, *History and Society in the Thought of Augustine*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970). Mary Carruthers, on a separate but related topic, argues that some of the notions of reforms in memory are inspired by monastic reforms to the shape of abbeys being changed, but also assumes that those monastic spaces were shaped especially in terms of helping “place” the liturgy and recollection space for meditating on Scripture (for the monks) (*The Craft of Thought*, 498).

⁵⁷. For more on cultural materialism as a methodology in this period specifically, see Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Elvan Ergut, *Rethinking Architectural Historiography*. (New York: Routledge, 2006); David Gaimster, introduction to the conference proceedings of *The Archaeology of Reformation 1480-1580*. Ed. Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist. (Leeds: Maney Publications, 2003).

texts as similar types of records of human narrative was “quite consciously perceived.”⁵⁸ In the Reformation, policy-makers and theologians alike often turned their attention to the structure of church buildings as the physical spaces wherein ceremonies and artifacts reside, in order to situate conversations about how best to express doctrines of faith, identity, and community through religious liturgical practice. In consequence, a critical focus on the nature of church buildings – both in relation to how policy-makers talked about those buildings, and also to how congregants physically interacted with those buildings – allows for an exploration of multiple facets of Reformation thought from multiple angles – doctrinal, political, social, cultural, economic – as they are illustrated by this symbolic physical representation of the building.

Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536-9 embodies all that is ambiguous and difficult to parse in the narrative of the English Reformation, as Henry's motivation will forever be complicated by accounts of its reception. The Dissolution of the Monasteries was, for Henry, more a matter of political advantage and consolidation of power than an indicator of any great loyalty to the emerging Protestant movement. Some scholars, such as Margaret Aston, pose this act as a ruthless example of top-down impositions of monarchical avarice that “shocked contemporaries” and laymen who saw Henry's actions as sacrilegious, rendering his actions extremely unpopular despite the presence of bona fide corruption in the monasteries. On the other hand, despite the cultural role many monastic centers played in their respective communities, other scholars find evidence that monasteries' longstanding corruption led laymen to see them as already corrupted or idolatrous and in need of demolition.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ . *Literature and Architecture in Early Modern England*. (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 7.

⁵⁹ . See Jennifer Summit, *Leland's Itinerary and the Remains of the Medieval Past*, ed. Gordon McMullan and David Mathews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 159-176. Jennifer Summit also argues that the entire scope of early modern historiography changed because of this event, and sees it as the beginning of the secular age. Much of this critical debate resulted from early twentieth century debates about whether the Reformation itself was

For these scholars, reading largely historiographical or scholarly accounts by Richard Sherbrooke, John Bale, and John Leland that mourn the social and cultural losses of monastic libraries and goods, the ruins that result from the Dissolution are indicative of widespread literary pessimism about the lastingness of any building or text. The cultural impact of the Dissolution presents scholars of the English Reformation with a conundrum, insofar as it starts a period of reform, progress, and vitality with a violent rupture with the past. For critics interested in the impact of this event on England's later cultural imagination, the Dissolution was such a traumatic event that it could only evoke reactions of loss and uncertainty. Margaret Aston argues that the presence of ruined, decayed monastic buildings on the English landscape “proved to be peculiarly fertile in stimulating consciousness of the past and in promoting historical activity” as a “spectacle of physical loss.”⁶⁰ For Aston, the monasteries were stimuli to the cultural imagination that cultivated “a sense of loss,” because the physical, visual reminders made observers “deeply conscious of living in the aftermath of iconoclastic revolution, in daily contact with its resultant decay.”⁶¹ Aston points to nostalgic mourning in historiographical accounts by scholarly authors such as John Leland and Richard Sherbrooke, and to poetic renderings of monastic ruins in which Donne hears “winds in our ruin'd abbeys rore” and Shakespeare chronicles the “bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang,” as evidence that the Dissolution inspired distrust, sadness, and a deep sense of loss in English culture.⁶² Indeed,

top-down, bottom-up, religiously- or –economically and –politically motivated. See GR Elton, *Reform and Reformation*. (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 238; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. (New York: Scribner, 1971); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁶⁰. “English Ruins and English History,” 231-232.

⁶¹. Ibid., 243. Aston does provide examples of actual decay (such as the anonymous Elizabethan Clergyman and Richard Sherbrooke who saw the demolition of Roche Abbey in their youths).

⁶². Ibid., 232.

Phillip Schwyzer makes the case that the sense of “instability, dissolution, and the inevitability of loss that the monasteries' presence in the landscape inspired transmuted into authors' anxieties about their own abilities and the historical lastingness of their cultural work, since “against such abominations, the durability of texts provides no compensation.”⁶³ The result of the Dissolution for these two scholars, then, is a wholly negative, anxious impact on the shape of English attitudes toward the ruination of the past.

However, though Aston's and Schwyzer's evidence makes a compelling argument for its traumatic effect on the English cultural imagination, their focus on later scholarly interpretations of the Dissolution misses how its original meaning and implementation might inspire other imaginative responses in addition to shock and loss. For one thing, the cumulative effect of ruination existed before the monasteries' dissolution, both from the usual wear-and-tear of time, and the precedent of earlier instantiations of monastic spoliation.⁶⁴ For another, the historiographical genres in sixteenth-century England examined by Aston used nostalgia primarily to reach their generic goal of establishing a narrative of English superiority in the present through its continuity with the past.⁶⁵ Consequently, there is a tendency in these scholarly interpretations of the Dissolution's impact to confuse later interpretive impulses with its

⁶³ . Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 78.

⁶⁴ . As Aston points out, “Nor was this the first time that English monasteries had been sacked and despoiled” (231). Indeed many of the later literary responses to which Aston and Schwyzer refers (Donne, Shakespeare, Dedham, and Weever) are post-sixteenth century (or slightly before), responding generations after the fact, without reference to the immediate effect of the Dissolution in its Reformation contexts. In an illustration of how our objects of inquiry often inform our methodology, it is telling that almost all of Aston (and Schwyzer's) visual evidence is taken from eighteenth century illustrations or present-day photographs, which elides later experiences of the monasteries with their later effects.

⁶⁵ . See John Leland's *Itinerary* (1538-43), and John Bale's *Index Britanniae Scriptorum* (1557). In fact, often it was not the buildings themselves, but the loss of the contents, cultural repositories of meaning, and especially the libraries, that later writers mourned.

immediate effect.⁶⁶ But most importantly, while Aston and Schwyzer are right to identify moments of mourning, anxiety, and nostalgia in the English imagination, the initial response of shock and loss does not preclude, nor is it mutually exclusive with, the imaginative capacity to rebuild, resurrect, and redeem that which has been lost. And if we resituate the Dissolution within its original, ecclesiological context, we see just such a redemptive impulse appear even in the conception, as it were, of their destruction.

As cloistered as some monastic communities might have been in the grand ecclesiastical structure of early modern English Christianity, the monasteries were still understood to be members of the universal Church. The very real evidence of corruption in some (although not all) prominent monastic communities was understood to be a corruption of the whole Church. In the 1536 Act for the Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries, Henry VIII makes it clear that it is thus his duty to reform them:

In consideration whereof, the king's most royal majesty – being supreme head on earth, under God, of the Church of England, daily finding and devising the increase, advancement, and exaltation of true doctrine and virtue in the said Church, to the only glory and honour of God, and the total extirping and destruction of vice and sin, having knowledge that the premises be true, ... that divers and great solemn monasteries of this realm wherein (thanks be to God) religion is right well kept and observed, be destitute of such full numbers of religious persons, as they ought and may keep.⁶⁷

Henry's duty as "supreme head on earth" of the Church of England is the "total extirping and destruction of vice and sin" within that Church, to the "increase, advancement and exaltation" of it. This declaration sounds similar to those of later Elizabethan writers, who saw their job as the

⁶⁶ Janowitz suggests that those impulses arose specifically during the Romantic movement in the 19th century, which saw a conflation of "the ruin sentiment" with a new "antiquarian impulse" (14).

⁶⁷ *Documents Illustrative of the English Church*, ed. Henry Gee and William Hardy. (London: Macmillan, 1921), 258-9.

“destruction” of corruption in order to reform the Church in England towards its redemptive purposes.

This argument arises out of the belief that the community is intertwined with the building in which it resides, and that the state of the former is expressed by the state of the latter. Henry claims that suppression is intended to curb “manifest sin, vicious, carnal, and abominable living ... daily used and committed among the little and small abbeys, priories, and other religious houses of monks ... whereby the governors of such religious houses and their convent spoil, destroy, consume, and utterly waste, as well as their churches, monasteries, priories, principal houses, farms, granges, lands, tenements, and hereditaments, as the ornaments of their churches.”⁶⁸ The edict associates the moral corruption of the monastic community with the spoiled, destroyed, and wasted monastic buildings, indicating that the building “manifests” in its physical state the internal, spiritual state of its community. Henry describes the monasteries as religious buildings which, with churches, tenements, hereditaments, and other shared inhabitable spaces, are supposed to be part of the larger body and community of Christian society in England. These spaces should thus promote mutual edification between the monks and their surrounding community, and act as the integral spaces where the community of believers come together to build each other up. But the monasteries, like the Jewish Temple before them, no longer fulfill their God-given role of edifying the people of God. Rather, Henry claims that the monastic communities treat these buildings as simply “ornaments” for their own glory, which suggests superfluity, and an unnecessary embellishment that is not central to the purpose of the building. This suggests that this community's corruption has allowed that space to become spoiled – and to

⁶⁸. Ibid., 257-258.

begin spoiling the surrounding communities by making them part of their own operation instead of serving and edifying others.

In practice, then, this “destruction of vice and sin” in the community is accomplished in the physical work of destroying vice and sin of the buildings themselves. Henry moves for the “dissolution, suppression, renouncing, relinquishing, forfeiting, giving up, or coming unto the king's highness” of the corrupt monasteries.⁶⁹ He poses the act of turning the monastic buildings and assets over to the crown's possession as a “dissolution,” or a dismantling and destruction of that which is corrupt. In other words, in order to banish destructive corruption in the Church, these particular physical instantiations of the Church must themselves be destroyed. Tather than being an avaricious mode of silencing opposition, then, the breaking up of the physical holdings is a way of breaking up manifestations of sin.

This physical dissolution is posed as an act that will better the Church by bettering the monastic community. Henry claims that “the possessions of such small religious houses, now being spent, spoiled and wasted for increase and maintenance of sin, should be used and converted to better uses, and the unthrifty religious persons, so spending the same, to be compelled to reform their lives.”⁷⁰ The destruction is not an act of annihilation, but an opportunity for the buildings to be “used and converted to better uses.” Its purpose is to “reform” the building – literally to be formed again, or rebuilt – and through it, the monastic community. The word “converted” here has two separate connotations: on the one hand, it denotes the physical alteration, or transformation, of the building out of the materials already present, so that

⁶⁹. “Act for the Dissolution of the Greater Monasteries (1539),” in *Documents*, 301. Note that this list of buildings is used throughout the 1539 article.

⁷⁰. *Documents*, 259. Alan Stewart makes a similar argument in respect to suspicions about whether the monastic spaces facilitated transgressive sexual relationships as specific markers of corruption in this time period, and how those suspicions played a part in the suppression of the monasteries (*Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 44-52).

the destruction allows for a rebuilding which, it is implied, will put the structure to “better uses” for the Church. On the other hand, it also refers to the act of religious conversion, the literal turning from (*convertere*) sin that precludes salvation, which aligns the building with the spiritual state of its owners again, and suggests that physical alterations can have a deeper spiritual impact. Part of that edification also includes reuniting the monks with the rest of the Church, as the hitherto “unthrifty” monastic communities, now newly “reformed,” will also, it is implied, be put to “better uses” just as their building will be, because the act will redirect that which they were “spending” on their own excesses to better causes. So Henry uses the inherent connection between the physical space and the community within it to promote the conversion of the buildings as a means of converting those inside it, and poses this act as a means of edifying even the corrupt monks who caused the destruction in the first place. Thus does Henry argue for his Dissolution as an act designed to promote reformation and further communion with the universal Church, rather than as an act of erasure.

From the material evidence we have of actual “dissolved” monasteries, we know that this rupturing, destructive event literally created the foundation for rebuilding, adapting, and creating viable places for future growth in the English Church. For as much as Schwyzer and Aston have pointed to the presence of ruins and newly-secularized buildings dotting the English landscape as signs of temporal unsustainability and loss, there were just as many instances of physical spaces whose presence and vitality could be visually identified as a *product* or creation of destroyed monasteries.⁷¹ Most monastic buildings were subject to what even Aston herself calls “directed

⁷¹. Schwyzer describes this view as “acknowledgedly optimistic” but as well-supported as his own, suggesting that these two interpretations may not necessarily be mutually exclusive (73). Maurice Howard argues that “the deliberate and thoroughgoing destruction that came to be associated with the Dissolution happened only at selective sites,” and that given examples of serious accidents that befell workers who did attempt total destruction, “A program of systematic destruction did not aim at the total obliteration of all the building ... the difficulties in pulling down walls and the inventiveness of the overseers in achieving this at Lewes, Stanley in Wiltshire and Reading

destruction,” an orderly breaking-down of the building piece by piece that, unlike their counterparts subjected to iconoclastic destruction on the Continent, avoided the substantial dangers of happenstance wreckage.⁷²

The intentionality behind the careful deconstruction of these buildings was also designed to make their materials available for further use, and the historian Maurice Howard points out that as much as there were ruins all over the landscape, there was also a “transformative” quality to the buildings, and “a lot of making new out of old materials” – so much so, in fact, that he calls this period of post-Dissolution activity “the Great Rebuilding.”⁷³ While we know that often the materials and goods of these communities were given either to the crown or to families in favor with the crown, what is less well-known is the extent to which those materials also went to supporting other religious buildings and communities. In fact, the intentional preservation of these artifacts (candlesticks, altar cloths, icons, silver plates and chalices) for sale to landowners and other churches often allows us to determine by sale records precisely where they went.⁷⁴

Despite the stereotype of dissolved monasteries as moldering, abandoned buildings, most monastic sites of dissolution had been systematically deconstructed *precisely* to avoid the persistence of ruination. For example, Thomas Wriothesley, the recipient of Tichfield Abbey,

suggest that such activity was uncommon and that techniques of destruction were improvised, sometimes with tragic results.” *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 24-25.

⁷². “English Ruins,” 326. Aston also points out that it triggered a period of “salvage and reconstruction” (326). Nevertheless, even when she sees adaptation, she sees it as “plundered, quarried, adaptation, decay,” and so as a bad thing.

⁷³. Howard, *Building*, 2-3. Scholars (such as John Bale) were, however, especially sad about the loss of the monastic libraries, which were scattered to the winds – but note (328) that Bale and Leland undertake rescue operations for much of those books that is much in line with this period's *modus operandi*.

⁷⁴. Gaimster, 127. For further case studies, see the account of the abbey in Essex in Joyce Youngs, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), 129, and Nicholas Doggett, “Demolition and Conversion of Monastic Buildings in Hertfordshire” for case studies in Hertfordshire (in Gaimster, *Archaeology of Reformation 1480-1580*, ed. Gaimster, David and Gilchrist, Roberta. (Leeds: Maney Publisher, 2003), 122).

was advised by the king's commissioner to plan fewer alterations to the building than he initially wanted, because as it stood the layout of the abbey would serve well with just a few adjustments, and “all houses of offices sufficiently had without charge now toward you was in vain if the church should be altered as you devise.”⁷⁵ Rather than tearing the whole church down to make way for the house, the commissioner recommended he take down “only that portion which is north from the steeple and knit with the dorter to stand,” and convert the rest wholesale.⁷⁶ Consequently, the “Place House” of Wriothesley's new establishment took on the shape of the monastic buildings, turning the cloistered middle into the center of activity in his house. Thus while we traditionally think of this period as creating spaces of absence, loss, and trauma, material evidence suggests that the cultural imagination would have access to just as many images of ruins that signified reuse and reconstruction.⁷⁷

To be clear, I am arguing here for a theological interpretation of the material Dissolution's *impulse* and *result* in the cultural imagination, rather than its *cause*. Often these practices of recycling, reuse, and transformation had social, economic, or merely practical causes. Frequently it was simply too costly to wholly destroy a monastic building, and far more financially sensible to convert the building to another use.⁷⁸ At other times, destruction was not

⁷⁵. Youings, *The Dissolution*, 246.

⁷⁶. Ibid. To his credit, Wriothesley followed his advice, and “the chapter house in fact became Wriothesley's chapel and the abbey frater his great hall.” Titchfield Abbey is now one of the most fruitful archeological sites for historians of the Reformation, given the clarity of the hybrid layout of the resulting country house. In fact, the building remained standing and in good condition until 1781, when it was intentionally ruined in order to create a Romantic landscape. See also W.H. St John Hope, “The Making of Place House at Titchfield near Southampton in 1538,” *Archaeological Journal*, LXIII (1906), 231-44. See Figure B for illustration.

⁷⁷. See also Maurice Howard, “Recycling the Monastic Fabric: Beyond the Act of Dissolution” in Gaimster and Gilchrist, 221-234.

⁷⁸. Howard, “Recycling,” 18. See also Ronald Hutton, “The Local Impact of the English Reformations” in *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Chris Haigh. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 144-138; David Knowles, *Bare Ruined Choirs: The Dissolution of the English Monasteries*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

culturally practical: given the pace at which the national doctrinal stance shifted from one Tudor monarch to another – from Henry's ambiguous proto-middle way to Edward's strident Protestantism, to Mary's staunch Catholicism, to Elizabeth's equally ambiguous *via media* settlement – provincial clergy were forced to eschew outright iconoclasm and spare religious objects and paraphernalia, often relegating them to storage, in case they were needed again in the future.⁷⁹ Sometimes their transformation was part of a calculated move to gain and display political or social advantage: the conferral of monastic lands to those in the peerage was considered a mark of honor, and those who received it would signal this fact by transforming their newly-acquired abbey buildings into the country houses that were coming into vogue.⁸⁰

But despite their mixed origins, the result of this transformation and rebuilding of monastic ruins along the English landscape exemplifies the character of a national church marked by the activities of resurrection out of decay in its very physical structure. The transformative destruction of monasteries went hand-in-hand with similar transformative practices in the local parish churches that neighbored them, and some post-Dissolution English churches also became sites of physical adaptations that exemplified the same impulse of rebuilding out of the corrupt past. Parish churches, like the monasteries, were originally designed for Catholic practice, and required the “adapting” of already-extant Catholic structures and ornamentation to the new regime. This necessitated physical alterations to the sanctuary to meet those doctrinal needs. Particularly with the advent of Elizabeth's “middle-way,” as Nigel Yates

⁷⁹. For another thing, was not always successful: often the buildings were just dissolved enough to prohibit the monks from coming back – mostly by removal of chapel items (and sometimes the monks returned anyway). That this activity was read as wholly destructive instead of selectively destructive may be due to an over-emphasizing of the severity of Cromwell's claim to have “pulled down no house thoroughly...but so defaced them as they should not lightly be made friaries again.” Aston, *English Ruins*, 386; for a further example, see also Eamon Duffy, *Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁸⁰. Howard, “Recycling,” 45.

claims, the English Church's main debate formed around the question of how to order a traditional Catholic ceremony to express Protestant doctrine.⁸¹ The archaeologist Sarah Tarlow's study of the afterlives of "Catholic things" demonstrates that congregants "incorporated" pre-Reformation artifacts into Protestant religious contexts either by concealing them within the church building, or by transforming their meaning and reinterpreting them in Protestant theological terms, "but in a way which built on and re-interpreted older meanings and structures."⁸² This new, intentional engagement with the revised meaning of the physical objects surrounding the congregation allowed the community to use the church building as a symbol of their identity as the English Church. Thus the process of re-using religious objects as tangible signs of re-ordering corporate religion indicates not so much an intentional application of theological resurrective principles to the systematic destruction of physical buildings, but rather an opportunity for the physical results of that destruction to edify the community inhabiting the building that shaped them as a congregation. In the English cultural imagination, the reconstructed physical spaces of English churches, in other words, testified to the possibilities of rebuilding through destruction just as decidedly as the ruins that stirred that imagination to mourning and loss.

4. John Foxe's Actes and Monuments (1570): Building a Textual Church

I have been arguing for the effects of the theology of resurrection on the physical makeup of English church buildings, and on the building activity associated with them. If the Dissolution

⁸¹. *Buildings, Faith, and Worship*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 23. These were mostly expressed by disagreements about arrangements of furniture and ornamentations within the church (especially regarding the communion table and altar).

⁸². "Reformation and Transformation: What happened to Catholic Things in a Protestant World?" *The Archaeology of Reformation 1480-1580*, ed. David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist. (Leeds: Maney Publication Press, 2003), 108-121. 115-116.

was the first bookend, as it were, of this cultural trend in the Protestant ecclesiology that influenced English Renaissance literary culture, I turn now to its twin at the other end of the moment – the literary depiction of the English Church that most thoroughly illustrates early Elizabethan Protestants' understanding of themselves and their identity as a community: John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1570).⁸³ In this book, in keeping with the redemptive-historical themes of his *Christus Triumphans*, Foxe narrates the lives and deaths of those he identifies as English Protestants, whose identity as part of the “True Church” is signaled by their persecutions at the hands of the Catholic Church, the body against which Protestants struggled most deeply in their quest for legitimacy.⁸⁴

The *Actes and Monuments* demonstrates, both narratively and textually, the intersection of bodies, buildings, and community within its understanding of the church as a space for resurrection. This starts, at its most basic level, with its primary subject matter. The martyrs are integral to Foxe's portrayal of the English Church because their stories reiterate the resurrective paradox of life through death. In the 1570 preface, Foxe explains that the martyrs' deaths

⁸³. While the book's first publication was in 1563, I am focusing on the 1570 edition in this chapter because its Preface “To the True and Faithful Congregation of Christ's Universal Church” provides, in its defense of his work, the clearest account of Foxe's purposes and conception of his own project. See Richard Helgerson's *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 256. Patrick Collinson, “John Foxe and National Consciousness,” in *This England: Essays on the English Nation and Commonwealth in the Sixteenth Century*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 193-211. Helen Cooney, preface in *Enigma and Revelation in English Renaissance Literature*. (Portland OR: Four Courts Press, 2002); Elizabeth Evenden, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: the Making of Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation*. (New York: Harpers and Row, 1963); Gretchen Minton, “‘The Same Cause and Like Quarrell’: Eusebius, John Foxe, and the Evolution of Ecclesiastical History,” *Church History* 71:4 (2002), 715-742; Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church*. (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1973).

⁸⁴. According to Palle Olsen, “Foxe made use of a great variety of salvation-historical schemata, all of which spelt out a view of history that in significant details differed from the traditional medieval one received in part from Augustine. According to this the age of the Church (identified in many apocalyptic sources with the ‘millennium,’ interpreted as a spiritual reign of Christ in and through the Church) would be followed at the end of history by a period of AntiChrist, which would in turn be followed by the Parousia, Resurrection, and Final Judgement. These would lead to a final, other-worldly state (or in some sources to a final, this-worldly and renewed state)” (“Millenarian?” 617).

“declare to the world what true Christian fortitude is, & what is the right way to conquere which standeth not in the power of man, but in hope of the Resurrection to come, & is now I trust at hand.”⁸⁵ In dying for their faith, these martyrs attest to a belief that their earthly bodies will be remade after death at the Second Coming of Christ. Likewise, the nature of their deaths as martyrs for the cause of Christ, in its mimicking of Christ's death, actually partakes in the mystical paradox of Christ's resurrection; as “declarations” of that resurrection, their deaths are expressions of the essence of that resurrection, and exist in the already-not-yet period when the hope in that triumph is simultaneously “to come” and also “at hand.” In that temporal setting, their deaths can further the work of Christ as it happens in the space and community of the Church: Foxe describes them as “dying in Christ's quarrel,” an act that the Church should “well consider how much she was beholding to their benefits,” indicating that their participation in Christ's work helps move the Church further toward its promised redemption.⁸⁶ In this, the lives and deaths of the martyrs edify the Church.

The famous frontispiece to the book dramatizes the ways in which the martyrs accomplish this edification by situating their lives and deaths within the framework of the

⁸⁵. “The first volume of the ecclesiastical history containing the acts and monuments of things passed in every kings time in this realm, especially in the Church of England principally to be noted : with a full discourse of such persecutions, horrible troubles, the suffering of martyrs, and other things incident, touching as well the said Church of England as also Scotland, and all other foreign nations, from the primitive time till the reign of K. Henry VIII.” (London : Printed by Iohn Day, Aldersgate, 1570), iij.

⁸⁶. Muller locates the origins of this notion in Tertullian's declaration that “Semen est sanguis christianorum” (the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church” (163). As with *Christus Triumphans*, Foxe still seems fixated on the Resurrection, as the whole scheme of action revolves around multiple appearances of the resurrected Christ to characters at different points in the historical narrative. See also Foxe's later works the *Latin Eicasmī seu mediations in Sacram Apocalypsim* (1587), and the *Treatise on Christus Triumphans* (1579); these works are largely scholarly and iterative of his earlier works, and were not as culturally significant. See Andreas Hofele, “John Foxe, Christus Triumphans” in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 123-143. For a reading of Foxe's interest in resurrection that sees it as problematic, see Andrew Escobedo, *Nationalism and Historical Loss in Renaissance England*. (Ithaca, Cornell Press, 2004), 81.

already-not-yet flow of redemptive history as it is narrated in Scripture.⁸⁷ The scene depicts the stages of Church history with a core group of “true” believers on the left-hand side occupying three distinct-but-related bubbles of action. This group, or congregation, signifies the community of martyrs, whose individual stories will be told within the coming pages, and whose martyrdoms are depicted in the successive scenes of the illustration. These identify that congregation as the community whose actions further God's redemptive plans in history, which is indicated by the sensation of forward movement created by the upward advancement of the story from the bottom to the top of the page – an advancement that suggests change over time within one single, overlapping narrative. Foxe poses the English martyrs' stories as the people of God at different stages of the Biblical narrative: A scene at the bottom that shows the congregation reading the vernacular Bible borrows images associated with the Temple in the Old Testament – the congregants worship under the Hebrew Tetragrammaton, the name of G-D, enshrined in a halo of the divine presence. An overlay of recent persecutions of Protestants in the middle creates continuity between the Jewish people and the contemporary English Protestant Church. And, at the last, we see the congregation's final state at the end of time at the top of the page, in an illustration of the martyrs gathered with the hosts of heaven surrounding the risen Christ at the last Judgment. In this, the contemporary Protestant congregation is both the fulfillment of the original true Church, the people of Israel whom God chose to enact His redemptive purposes in history, and also its continuation as the persecuted Church in Revelation.

In this illustration, the martyrs' lives and deaths are central to the progress of the Church because those actions, in imitation of Christ, bring eternal life from death through the power of the Resurrection. Within the movement of the martyrs upward through the next two scenes, the

⁸⁷. See Figure C for reproduction. Foxe collaborated closely with John Day's printing, and had much input into the makeup of the frontispiece. See Deborah Greenberg, “Community of Texts: Producing the First and Second Editions of the Acts and Monuments,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36:3 (2005), 695-715.

central action is the transformation of the martyrs from a state of death to a state of life. This allows the church of martyrs to progress toward culmination as it moves the Church out of the time of tension and into the fulfillment of God's plan at the end of time. Foxe depicts the progress of that community in the movement from first being burned at the stake in the middle segment, and then appearing in triumph at Christ's second coming in the upper segment. The continuity created between these scenes by the overlapping states of the martyrs indicates a state of transformation: in both segments, the martyrs kneel, wear white robes, and blow on trumpets pointing toward heaven. These accouterments allude to the promise made in the Book of Revelation to those who suffered for their faith, when early in the apocalyptic narrative they are given "long white robes" as a promise that they will, eventually, be united with Christ after His glorious return to earth.⁸⁸ In the upper scene, as a sign of the fulfillment of their promised triumph, the martyrs now hold keys and crowns while surrounding the risen, glorified Christ.

Within that narrative overlap between the middle and upper scenes, it is their very deaths that move the action forward toward redemption.⁸⁹ The similar depictions align their death by burning with their eternal life with Christ, and they are, in their deaths in the middle scene,

⁸⁸. Revelation 6:11.

⁸⁹. See Janel Mueller, who has argued that the *Acts and Monuments* inverts the traditional consequences of physical pain – whereas torture and state-inflicted pain is meant to break the self by domination, Foxe's martyrs are actually made by it, creating their identity and sense of self through it. Their sense of identity is created by a transformation enacted in their pain, when "the body is conceived as raw stuff for processing into an entity of a qualitatively different kind." "Pain, Persecution and the Construction of Selfhood in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*," *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, ed. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 161-87. 170. Mueller argues that Foxe juxtaposes this conception of martyrs as sacrifices with Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, in order to proselytize by refuting Catholic heresy. It is also a reversal of Elaine Scarry's theory of torture in *The Body in Pain*, insofar as "torture affords the occasion not just for making the self but for making (or remaking) the community" as the martyrs share their experience (Mueller, 167). For more on Foxe and the purposes of pain and martyrdom, see also Thomas Freeman, "Racking the Body, Shaping the Text: The Account of Anne Askew in Foxe's Book of Martyrs," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001), 1165-1196; John Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature 1593-1564*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and "John Foxe and the Joy of Suffering," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27:3 (1996), 721-734; Catherine Randall, *(Em)Bodying the Word: Textual Resurrections in Martyrological Narratives*, (New York: P. Lang, 1992); Jennifer Rust, *The Body in Mystery: The Political Theology of the Corpus Mysticum in the Literature of Reformation England*. (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014).

taking part in Christ's own death and resurrection, and the promise of eternal redemption it holds out. This suggests that the act of death and destruction is what transforms the martyrs, allowing the narrative to flow upward from one scene to the next. Thus, eternal life is not just a hope in which to find solace in the midst of suffering, but suffering itself is the catalyst for resurrection that moves the martyrs into the redemptive state of Christ's second coming. The martyrs' deaths create the possibility of life after death *because* martyrdoms exhibit the key mechanism by which the Church is formed – the mystery of Christ's resurrection through destruction.

Most significantly, Foxe uses a physical church space to locate the action of this narrative. At the bottom of the page, the community of martyrs worships together in a church space, which is contrasted with an open-air scene of Catholic mass. This suggests that the building itself is a signifier of the Church's identity as the people of God. From this scene, the actions of the martyred congregation in the flow of redemptive history visually emerge out of that space, as the middle and upper scenes are aligned so that they arise out of this space of the contemporary Protestant church building. And so, from this signifying site, the ongoing history of the Church develops, situating that building as the paradoxical site where past and present have future significance that gives meaning to present suffering. This alignment grounds the action of the narrative in a physical space, suggesting that the church building is the site of this grand, sweeping movement toward redemption, and that it acts as a representation of the Church community upon which Foxe's book focuses.

As its primacy in the frontispiece suggests, the redemptive connotations of church imagery help shape a sense of Foxe's literary purpose, as church imagery provides a metaphorical language for his textual activity. By "textual activity," I mean the companion acts of writing and reading that create community between author and audience within the space of

the poem. In this interchange, the textually-resurrective fragments that make up Foxe's text are part of a larger conception of his book as a church space. At the beginning of the Preface, Foxe sets up a direct analogy between the text of his book and the Old Testament Temple, saying

Salomon the peaceable Prince of Israell, as we read in the third of Kynges, after he had finished the buildyng of the Lordes Temple (which he had vij. Yeares in hand) made his petition to the Lord of all that should pray in the sayd Temple, or turne their face toward it, ... and his request was graunted, the Lord aunsweryng him ... it so pleased hys goodness to respect this prayer of the kyng, that not only he promised to heare them which there prayed, but also replenished the same with hys owne glory.⁹⁰

The Temple is, again, a space where the people of God can come and dwell with their God, allowing his redemptive plans to inhabit their space and community. As his text is the Temple, Foxe himself, as the author, is the builder, and his writing is a form of labor. He draws a parallel between the spiritual significance of Solomon's Temple and his book, the "Acts of God's holy martyrs," claiming that, like Solomon, "Upon lyke trust in Gods gracious goodnes. If I sinneful wretch, not comparing with the building of that Temple but followyng the zeale of the builder ... after my vij. yeares trauaile ... most humbly would craue of almighty God to bestow hys blessing vpon the same."⁹¹ He describes his authorial zeal as that of a "builder," characterizing the act of writing as an architectural labor that "builds" a text up in the manner of a building. Indeed, he also draws a parallel between the seven years of the Temple's building and the seven years' "travail" of his writing and editing, which portrays the act of writing the book as one of physical toil. This positions his writerly engagement with this text as one of constant, almost literal, edification.

Through this position as edifying builder, Foxe then establishes an analogy between the Temple and his own work, and claims that his book functions as a *textual* space that figuratively

⁹⁰. *Actes*, 1.

⁹¹. *Ibid.*

does the work of the Temple space. While modestly demurring that he cannot compare his own work with Solomon's building, he nevertheless does so, and in comparing his work to Solomon's implies that the text of the *Actes and Monuments* is a Temple space where God can meet the Church. In this capacity, he also aligns his prayers for its use with those of Solomon's for the use of the Temple, as he prays that his book, as the repository of the stories of martyrdom, will also give "spiritual fruit" to the believers who read it, and in doing so, further the "profit of His church." The book he has written and built, then, is figured as a church space, insofar as it is a space where God meets his people and enacts his redemptive-historical purposes through the community of believers.⁹²

This church space is, moreover, created out of the stories of the martyrs themselves, which embody the power of the Resurrection in their very broken, fragmentary literary nature. On one level, this comes from their literally fragmentary textual origins. Foxe's favorite way of describing the textual sources of the martyrological narratives he constructs in the book is the word "monuments." But the way Foxe describes those monuments suggests that "monuments" are not just the documents, but the characters of the martyrs which those documents create. In the title, the "present history containyng the Actes of Gods holy Martyrs, and Monumentes of his Church ...by example of theyr lyfe, fayth, and doctrine," the "monumentes" of the title refers to historical records, particularly the documentary evidence Foxe provides in the interrogations, letters, and other historical records of the martyrs on which he bases his stories. But the syntactical ambiguity of the "and" seems to separate the "holy Martyrs" from the possessive "theyre" of the "lyfe, fayth, and doctrine," suggesting that the "monumentes of his Church" is

⁹². For precedence, a late 14th century anonymous poem called "Cleanness" also compares the falling apart of a manuscript to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. *Cleanness : an alliterative tripartite poem on the deluge, the destruction of Sodom, and the death of Belshazzar, by the poet of Pearl*, trans. D.S. Brewer and ed. Israel Gollancz. (Totowa NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974).

also a description of the “holy Martyrs” themselves, and not just the documentary evidence they left behind. They are, as Catherine Randall Coates describes them, a “textual body, one composed not of physical members, but rather of literary fragments: recorded testimonies, recited sermons, recuperated texts.”⁹³ They are, in other words, actually made of and defined by the fragmentary nature of the monuments from which their narratives arise.

The description of martyrs as the figural “Monuments of his church” also relies on a specific tradition of ecclesiastical architecture, creating a connection between the textual nature of the accounts he draws from, and the Temple-like purpose of the book's contents.⁹⁴ In church architectural terms, “monuments” refer specifically to the carved, life-like figures made of stone or brass, sometimes free-standing, sometimes in bas relief, and placed above graves within or on the grounds of church and monastic buildings – made famous poetically a century later in George Herbert's “Church Monuments.”⁹⁵ These “monuments” represented the likenesses of those who had died, acting as spiritual examples and inspiration for those believers still living who might see them at church. As monuments, the fragmented textual bodies of the martyrs therefore become figuratively transformed into specific architectural features within the church of the text.

In the medieval period, monuments were often accompanied by an inscription offering a prayer for the dead's soul in Purgatory, de-emphasizing the promise of eternal life. But as Peter Sherlock has demonstrated, starting in the 1540s, as the Reformation emphasized the centrality of the Resurrection in Christian theology more stridently, those inscriptions began attesting to a

⁹³. *(Em)Bodying the Word*, 17.

⁹⁴. Escobedo identifies these specifically as the documents and transcripts of torture and persecution: “Foxye imagines the 'monuments' of his book's title to refer to the physical records that he preserves and makes known by reproducing them in print.” (41)

⁹⁵. For a full reading of Herbert's “Church Monuments,” see Chapter 4.

belief in the Resurrection instead.⁹⁶ One unidentified marker in Kent dated in the 1590s, for example, depicts a dead woman rising from the grave as an attending angel blows a triumphant trumpet, with an inscription that reads “Lord, I come willingly,” depicting the dead's hoped-for future resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ.⁹⁷ These monuments were, in other words, visual signifiers of the mystery of the Resurrection, holding out the promise of life eternal in the midst of commemorating the very state of death. The martyrs of the *Actes and Monuments*, then, embody the spirit of the Resurrection, and are, in their own right, resurrected figures themselves. As Randall notes, even in being “textualized bodies,” made of fragments from other texts, these martyrs are literally “re-membered,” or put back together as a whole narrative through re-creating that which had been destroyed in previous texts.⁹⁸ In this historical context, then, the visual image proffered by the text is of martyrs as stonework images whose presence betokens a hope of resurrection in the midst of the church's physical gathering space.

The monuments' resurrective nature, moreover, proffers not just hope for the future, but a way forward in the present for Foxe in re-building the Church of England. For Foxe desires to re-create in his text a picture of the true Church, hitherto corrupted by earlier Catholic sources. Foxe uses his textual “monuments” to rebuild an image of the true Church, and claims that his work, as a depiction of the true Church, improves on earlier Catholic accounts, which he says “lamented me to see in *their* [the Catholics'] Monmentes the principall pointes, which chiefly concerned the state of Christs Church, and were most necessary of all Christen people to be

⁹⁶. Many would quote verses that expressed this resurrection hope; especially popular was Philippians 1:21 “For Christ is to me bothe in life, and in death aduantage.” See Sherlock, “Monumental Bodies,” *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England*. (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2008), 41-71.

⁹⁷. See Figure D. Sherlock, 48; See D.W. Belcher, *Kentish Brasses*. (London: Sprague, 1888), 68, fig. 130.

⁹⁸. “The text thus becomes, through the remembering of bodies and the re-membering of them, a transcription of the precursor inscription” (16).

known, either altogether permitted, or if any mention thereof were inserted, yet were all things drawn to honour specially the Church of Rome.”⁹⁹ However, as depictions of the false Church of Rome, those works are noteworthy for their fragmentary *treatment* of the truth, since their “principall pointes” are “drawen” toward the goal of increasing Rome's fame, and so are merely partial or corrupted in their handling of histories. Their fragmentation as monuments, in other words, is more a matter of inherent corruption than the dissection of the texts themselves. And as a result, the picture they create of “the state of Christes Church” is equally distorted.

But true to the resurrective nature of fragmentation in the space of the church, Foxe uses these past monuments to facilitate the redemptive act of transforming corruption into wholeness. Foxe uses these partial-truth monuments as the fragments from which he constructs his picture of the whole church, his “full and a conplet history” which is “faithfully collected out of all our Monasticall writers and written Monumentes.”¹⁰⁰ He poses his text as the perfectly constructed whole that is made by “collecting” the fragments of incomplete previous histories. This whole text is marked by the activity of correcting the mistakes of those past documents, as his book “should containe neither every vayne written fable, for that would be to much, nor yet leaue out any thing necessary, for that would be to little.”¹⁰¹ By creating a narrative that is neither “to much” nor “to little” in its approach to the past, Foxe's procrustean editing takes the mistakes of past histories and turns them into a true narrative, built both literally and figuratively out of the fragments of past texts in their very corruption.

Foxe therefore puts his monuments – on both a large and small scale – to redemptive purposes in building up the text. The “monumental” martyrs do more than mark space for

⁹⁹. *Actes*, 2. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁰. Ibid.

¹⁰¹. Ibid.

remembrance and hope; they also embody the resurrective activity by which their textual depiction is made. They are, as St. Paul would put it, the “living stones” of the text,¹⁰² and their embodiment of the spirit of resurrection in their textual constitution allows Foxe to create a whole, true, redemptive narrative of the Church out of the corrupted, partial-fragments of earlier texts. Foxe's Solomonic text-church is, in other words, figuratively built from the resurrective texts of the martyrs' lives and deaths, creating a textual space that is marked by building activity facilitated through acts of writerly resurrection.

The redemptive textual activity that marks Foxe's creation of his “monumental” martyrs and his metaphorical “text-church” also allows him to create community with his readers as members of that church. His preface defending his work against critics of the first edition demonstrates his desire to create a community of readers whose engagement with the text will bring them into the church – both in terms of the text itself and, through it, the Church in history – by partaking in the same textual building activity. Foxe's project depends on an idealized audience of English readers who, according to Richard Helgerson, are framed as a church community, and whose “members are readers who imagine themselves in invisible fellowship with thousands of other readers.”¹⁰³ It is, more particularly, the activity of reading itself which

¹⁰². 1 Peter 2:5, “And ye as liuelie stones, be made a spiritual house.”

¹⁰³. *Self-Crowned Laureates*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 266. For Helgerson, this “takes the narrative form of a projection from persecution to an unseen triumph, a triumph that was figured by not exhausted by Elizabeth's assumption of the English throne.” He thus assumes the active participation in an imagined community made up of both characters and readers, that is part of the church. Much has already been written about the overt “shaping” impulse in the book, as Foxe attempts to inculcate the reader into English Protestant thought and practice through a didactic encounter with the beliefs and values the martyrs evince. Catherine Coates describes the book as an “inherently dialogic” hagiography that “solicit[s] the reader's active participation” (*(Em)Bodying the Word*, 3); Patrick Collinson says that the book “formed a textual community even as the text was constructed by that community” (“John Foxe and National Consciousness,” 203); Susan Felch has demonstrated that much of the apparatus of the text – the illustrations, footnotes, and references – are specifically designed to “scaffold” the reading so that it “helps shape the reader's expectations of communal interpretation, bringing the reader into the interpretive community” (“Shaping the Reader in the Acts and Monuments,” in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. David Loades. (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 52-65. 64). Deborah Greenberg literalizes this community in her examination of the collaborative nature of the book's production in *Community of Texts*:

allows them to take part in this fellowship. In his initial comparison of the text to Solomon's Temple, Foxe stipulates the purpose of his book to be that, "as the prayers of them, which prayed in the outward Temple were heard: so all true disposed mindes which shall resort to the readyng of this present history contaynyng the Actes of Gods holy Martyrs, and Monumentes of his Church, may by example of theyr life, fayth, and doctrine, receiue some such spirituall fruit to their soules through the operation of his grace, that it may be to the aduauncement of his glory, and profite of his Church, through Crist Iesus our Lord."¹⁰⁴ The readers are positioned as worshippers, or inhabitants of the Temple. The act of reading is compared to the act of prayer, since both activities yield "spirituall fruit" that leads to growth in the Christian reader, and the comparison renders the act of reading as participation in the space of the church-text.

Specifically, this act of reading-worship joins the readers to the work of the text by aligning them with the work of the author. For just as writing is depicted as a labor, so too is reading. Foxe actually refers more than once to the act of reading his text as "labour," telling those daunted by the wealth of textual sources that "if any shall thinke hys labour to much in readyng this history, his choyce is free either to read this or any other which he more mindeth."¹⁰⁵ However, Foxe's act of sifting through the textual monuments of earlier works is meant to "with moderate discretion ... ease the labour of the reader from turning ouer such a number of writers," and "open the plaine truth of times lying long hid in obscure darknes of

Producing the First and Second Editions of the Acts and Monuments," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36:3 (2005), 695-715. See also Liz Koblyk, "The Reader's Object I Foxe's Acts and Monuments," *Acts of Reading: Interpretation, Reading Practices, and the Idea of the Book in John Foxe's Acts and Monuments*, ed. Ryan Netzley. (Newark: University of Delaware, 2010), 235.

¹⁰⁴ . *Actes*, 1.

¹⁰⁵ . *Actes*, 2.

antiquitie.”¹⁰⁶ This description of reading as labor creates an equivalence between the reader’s readerly engagement and the author’s writerly engagement, suggesting that both activities contribute to the status of the text as a meeting place of those who work toward redemption. Therefore the act of reading allows the reader-worshippers to join Foxe in the building of the text, because it means taking part in a similar form of engagement with the textual fragments from which the book is built.

The creation of this equivalency suggests that to labor on the text is to take part in its building. Foxe invites the reader to join him in his work with the monuments of past texts, and in doing so to join the work of both him and his “monumental martyrs” in the space of the text, helping him create a whole picture of the Church out of the fragments of the past. Indeed, the “labour” of the reader refers to that which Foxe has already set out to do, which is to construct “the plaine truth” of the history of the Church by “turning ouer such a number of writers”;¹⁰⁷ while Foxe hopes that his work as an authors has “eased” the readers’ labors in sifting through the fragments of the past, the readers are nevertheless expected to take part in that work through reading the product of his authorial labor. Consequently, Foxe brings the readers who choose his text into the resurrective spirit inhabiting the fragmentary pieces that bring the text-church to life.¹⁰⁸

The importance of the “labour” image to describe the act of reading as part of his larger theme of the text as a church space is evident from the extent to which wrong or malicious

¹⁰⁶. Ibid.

¹⁰⁷. Ibid.

¹⁰⁸. Randall sees this as a consequence of the reader breathing life into the textual words of the martyrs, as “the entrance of the reader into a martyrological account activates a drama in which the words of salvation are spoken through, incidentally, the body of the martyr” (14).

reading can likewise tear down the text. In his initial comparison of his book to Solomon's temple, Foxe defends himself from critics, saying “but as it hapned in that Temple of Salomon, that all which came thether, came not to pray, but many to prate, some to gaze and see newes, other to talke and walke, some to buye and sell, some to carpe and find fault, and finally some also at the last to destroy and pluck downe, as they did in deed...euen so neither do I looke for any other in this present history, but that amongst many well disposed readers, some waspes nest or other will be styrred yp to busze about myne ears.”¹⁰⁹ In the analogy, readers are, again, worshippers in the “Temple” of the book, one whose participation is marked by their reading-as-prayers. But as with the Jewish Temple, not all those who enter it act as the people of God; Foxe describes those whose purposes in the Temple – the praters, those who “carpe and find fault,” and those who “buye and sell” – as being inimical to the purpose of the people of God, presumably because their actions are aimed at harming, rather than bettering, the community. Foxe implies that these activities are akin to “destroy[ing] and pluck[ing] downe” the very Temple building itself, invoking its destruction in the Old Testament. Those who “buye and sell” recall Jesus' cleansing of the Temple, in which the corruption of the Temple by those who harm the community predicates the need for its destruction and rebuilding in Christ's body through death and resurrection. Foxe compares these corrupted activities to readers of his text who are not “well disposed,” who intentionally read him wrongly, or criticize his work unfairly. Those readers may still engage with the text-temple in an act of reading as architectural labor, albeit here in an act of tearing down. Though they are not part of the community of the book – made up of “well disposed” readers, martyrs, and Foxe himself – their activity still has the capacity to affect its structure. Reading as a form of textual labor around the structure of the book facilitates an engagement with and formation of a communal body around the text.

¹⁰⁹. *Actes*, 1.

The connection established in Foxe's elaborate analogy between the architecture of his textual church and the readers' spiritual state demonstrates the final purpose of Foxe's book. As Helgersson notes, Foxe desires the edification of the “invisible fellowship” of his readers so that they may join the work of the nascent English Church as it attempts to establish its post-Catholic validity.¹¹⁰ The building activity of his readers in their engagement with the text allows them to enter the broad historical sweep of the Church when they become part of the readerly community around the book space. The preface is addressed to “the true and faithfull congregation of Christes universall Church, with all and singular the members thereof, wheresoever congregated or dispersed through the Realme of England.” Foxe claims as his readers the full “universall church” that makes its appearance as the “holy Catholic church” in the Nicene and Apostle’s creeds, and marches through the historical progress of the Biblical narrative toward redemption, given historical form at this present moment “in the Realme of England.”¹¹¹ The goal here is to give validity to the English Church by identifying it with the “true” universal Church. This address constitutes readers as “the true and faithful congregation,” or the true Church, enveloping the readerly community of the book within the universal Church itself. To constitute his book’s congregation in and around such an identity in this bid for validity means that Foxe hopes, by inculcating his readers into the “church” of his book, to allow them to enter into the larger congregation in England and, by doing so, to join England to the progress of the universal Church toward the end of time.

Foxe and his church can enter this progress because, at heart, the building activity of readers – be it to build up the text by being “well disposed” toward it, or to tear it down by

¹¹⁰. *Self-Crowned Laureates*, 266.

¹¹¹. Cited in *The Christian Theology Reader*, ed. Alister McGrath. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995), 7-8.

carping and criticizing it – is about the capacity of the readers in that church congregation to better one another spiritually. Foxe ends his preface with a specific “Exhortation to the Church of England,” which encourages his readers, while waiting for Christ's coming, to “in the meane time let us for our partes with all pacient obedience wayte upon his gracious laysure, and glorifie hys holy name, and edifie one an other with all humilitie.”¹¹² In this exhortation, Foxe includes himself within the plural first person, creating a community of himself, his subject, and his audience. In that community, the wait for eternal redemption should be filled with “edifying” one another, the spiritual purpose of the Church in history, facilitated by the church building. The edification of the text by the readers, in other words, is meant to facilitate the edification of the community surrounding the text by means of each other’s mutually-edifying activities. So the end of his work, as he understands it, is to take part in the mutual “edification” of believers, the building up of each member of the readerly congregation by the others, so that they can take part in the Church of England – which, in turn, can join the universal Church, building toward eternity in the already-not-yet space of Scripture's redemptive narrative.

5. Conclusion

The redemptive-historical narrative of the Church as the site of salvific, resurrective activity in the community of God is something we will see again in later poets. I ended this chapter with a reading of the *Actes and Monuments* because Foxe, perhaps more than any other early religious writer in the English Reformation, is responsible for shaping literary representations of the English Church in later Elizabethan culture. The *Actes and Monuments* had the sort of cultural meaning and influence that is difficult to quantify for its sheer magnitude. Since its first publication in 1563 at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, it went through four

¹¹². *Actes*, 6.

major revisions between then and 1583, and was so ubiquitous as to have been included with the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Bible in every parish church. Its popularity, as William Haller has so famously accounted it, was not in saying anything new, but rather in expressing deeply held English beliefs about themselves and their elect status.¹¹³ It is thus rightly regarded as one of the most influential accounts of orthodox English Protestantism in England during the sixteenth century, and it became “an essential part of that familiar code of reference and expression in which no one sharing in the life of that dynamic age could do without.”¹¹⁴ This is particularly true for its influence on later early modern writers, as it “suppl(ied) the immediate background for the literary flowering at the time of Sidney, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare,” especially since “many mid-century texts came back into print during the early decades of Elizabeth's rule,” making it widely available during the time of the three poets I explore in the rest of this dissertation.¹¹⁵

In the chapters to come, I will be specifically interested in the “latter day” interpretations, as it were, of Foxe's creation of a link between subject, audience, and author as members of the same Body of Christ, and in how it sets the groundwork for the kinds of relationships we will see later in poets. Foxe's work both demonstrates Protestant notions of church as an image that bespeaks matters of resurrection and redemption through destruction, and ponders how or why those images might appear in later poetic works of this period. I now turn to an exploration of how those themes of redemption and destruction shape the church imagery of three poets writing over the next half-century: Edmund Spenser, Aemilia Lanyer, and George Herbert.

¹¹³. Haller, *Elect Nation*, 15.

¹¹⁴. King, *English Reformation Literature*. 434. King's book argues that Foxe is the inheritor of a rich Tudor tradition of Protestant writers and literature that often go neglected.

¹¹⁵. Ibid, 428.

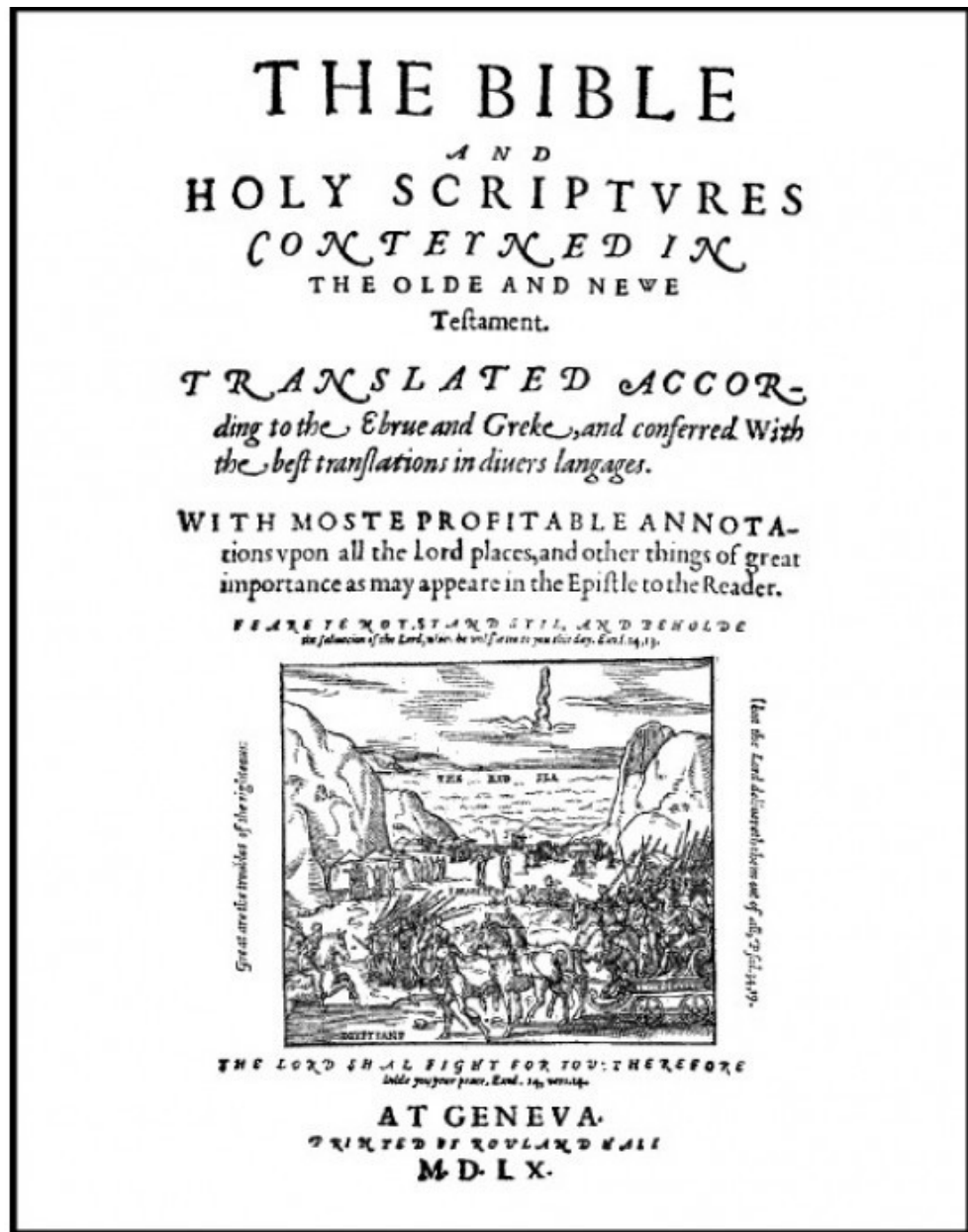


Figure A: Frontispiece for the 1560 edition of the Geneva Bible, depicting Israel crossing the Red Sea to escape the tyrant Pharaoh. From *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Ed*, intro. by Lloyd Berry. (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Press, 2007).

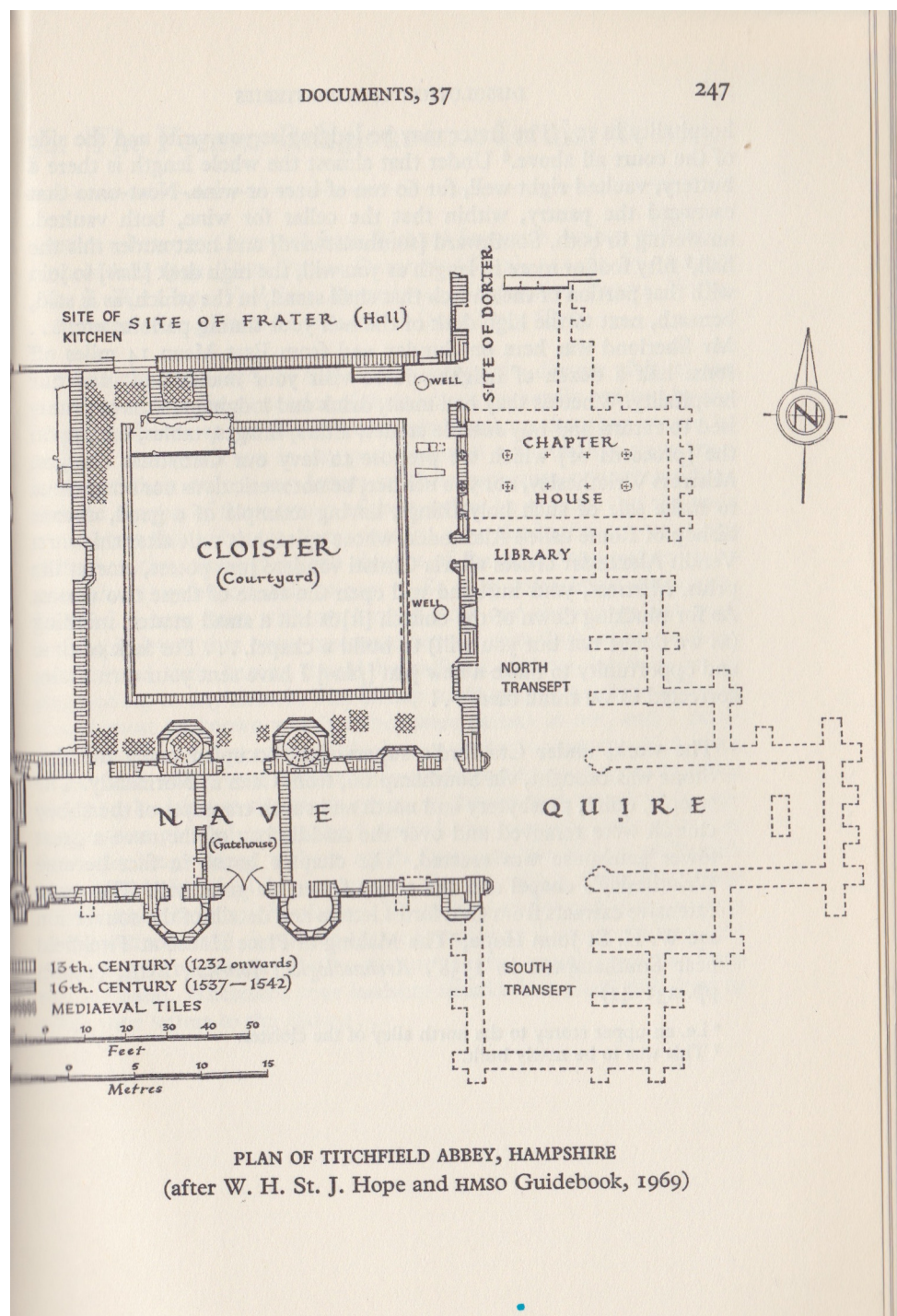


Figure B: Plan of Tichfield Abbey, before its transformation into Place House, the residence of Thomas Wriothesley. In Youings, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 247.



Figure C: Present day photo of Titchfield Abbey, showing where Thomas Wriothesley built his Place House out of an amalgamation of new and old stonework from the previous abbey building. (Keith Park, "Titchfield Abbey," http://www.photographers-resource.co.uk/a_heritage/Abbeys/LG/Titchfield_Abbey.htm)

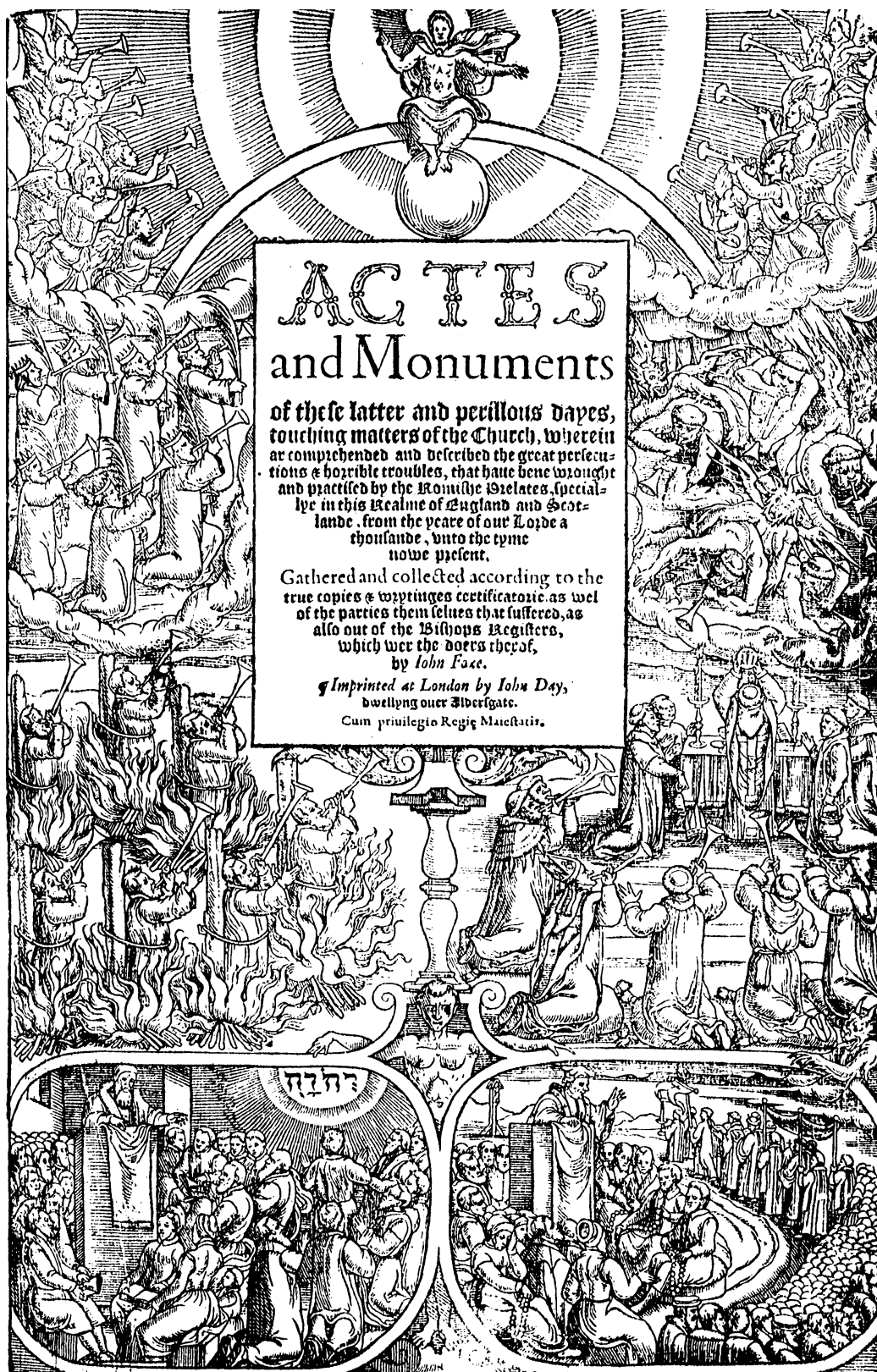


Figure D: Frontispiece to Foxe's *Actes and Monuments of These Latter Perilous Days* (1570).

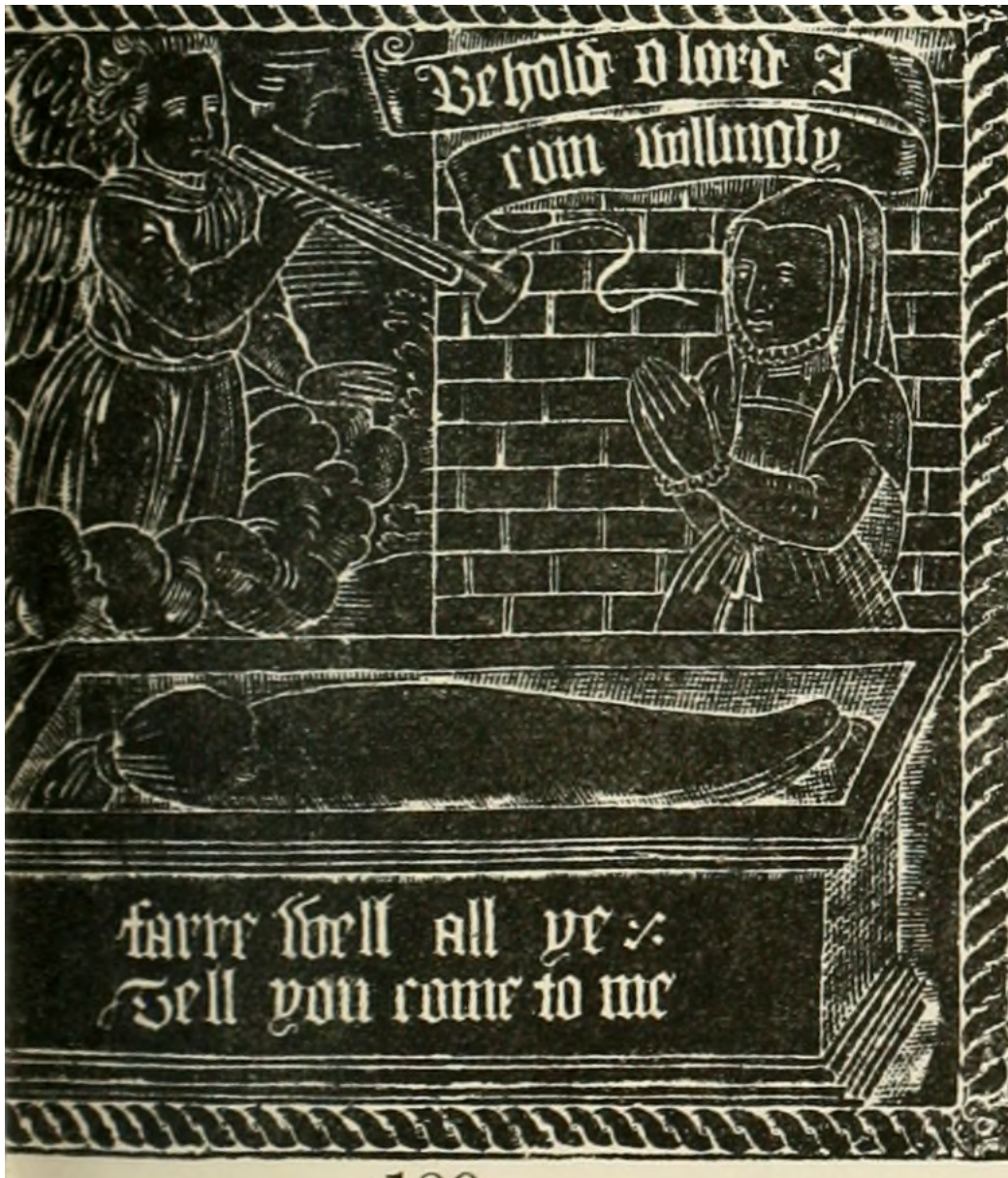


Figure E: Picture of a monumental brass grave marker, unidentified woman in Kent, c. 1590's, demonstrating emphasis on the Resurrection in church monuments post-Reformation. (Belcher, 68.)

CHAPTER 2

The Church of Philip Sidney: Resurrection and the City of God in Spenser's "The Ruines of Time"

1. Introduction

For a poem praising the lastingness of poetry, Spenser's 1591 "The Ruines of Time" focuses on a seemingly contradictory assertion. In his dedicatory epistle to Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, Spenser claims to have written the poem to "revive" the memory of her late brother, Philip Sidney, whose recent death after the Battle of Zutphen "cut off" "the hope of anie further fruit" of his poetic career, "and also the tender delight of those their first blossoms nipped and quite dead" (230).¹ To that end, Spenser hopes to remember Sidney through this poem, "intituled by a generall name of the worlds Ruines; yet speciallie intended to the renowming of that noble race, from which both you and he sprong, and to the eternizing of some of the chiefe of them late deceased." Spenser presents a paradoxical claim here: following the model of his predecessor Joachim du Bellay, Spenser's poem is a complaint about "the worlds Ruines," eulogizing the physical ruins of a Roman city.² As in du Bellay's poem, these ruins

¹. "The Ruines of Time," in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William Oram. (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 225-262. All subsequent references to the "Ruines" is from this edition. For more on the enormous output of poetry about Sidney after his death, see Margaret Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Steven Mentz, "Selling Sidney: William Ponsonby, Thomas Nashe, and the Boundaries of Elizabethan Print and Manuscript Cultures," in *Text*: 13 (2000), 151-174.

². Joachim du Bellay, "Les Antiquitez de Rome," in *The Regrets*, ed. and trans. Richard Helgerson. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006), 245-296; for Jan Van Der Noot, see Spenser's English translation of Van Der Noot's verse epigrams, "A Theatre for Worldlings," in *A Norton Critical Edition: Edmund Spenser's Poetry*, ed. Hadfield and Prescott. (New York: Norton Press, 2014). See Margaret Ferguson, "The Afflatus of Ruin": Meditations on Rome by du Bellay, Spenser, and Stevens" in *Roman Images*, ed. Annabel Patterson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1983), 23-51; Anne Prescott, *French Poets and the English Renaissance: Studies in Fame and Transformation*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978) and "Spenser (Re)reading du Bellay: Chronology and Literary Response" in *Spenser's Life and the Subject of Biography*, ed. Anderson, Cheney, and Richardson. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 131-145. See Julia Conway Bondanella, "Petrarch as Visionary: the Import of Conzone 323" in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later* ed. Scaglione (1975), 117- 28; Richard Cooper, "Poetry in Ruins: The Literary Context of du Bellay's Cycles on Rome," *Renaissance Studies* 3:2 (1989), 156; Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*. (New Haven: Yale

provide an object upon which the poet focuses his meditation on the ruins of the temporal world: the ravages of historical loss and decay over time. The effects of the “worlds Ruine” for Spenser are embodied by Sidney’s death which, he makes clear, smashes the hope of Sidney’s continued natural presence on earth: Sidney is now “cut off,” without “hope of anie further fruit,” his potential “nipped” and “quite dead.” And yet, Spenser claims that this poem on ruination will bring “[renown]” to his greatest poetic contemporary. The finality of Sidney’s death and ruination on earth shall, somehow, be “revived,” bringing him back from death, and “eternize” him, giving him eternal life.

This contradiction can also be found in the larger, theological framework at the heart of Spenser’s portrayal of Verulamium, the Roman-British city that provides the backdrop for the poem. By Spenser’s time, Verulamium’s main claim to notoriety was its ruination; the city was lost to history in the middle ages when its extant ruins were quarried to build its successor, the city of St. Albans. Spenser gives the ruined Verulamium a thoroughly apocalyptic identity that is derived from the Book of Revelation, the prophetic account of the end of time in the New Testament. Verlame, the genius of the city and the speaker’s main interlocutor, links its ruination to that of her imperial mistress, Rome, “that same great seven headed beast, / That made all nations vassals of her pride.”³ But how does this apocalyptic backdrop for Verulamium extend the possibility of eternizing Sidney in the poem?

University Press, 1982); Reinier Leuhuis, “Visions of Ruin: *Vanitas Vanitatum* in du Bellay’s *Songe* and Petrarch’s *Canzone Delle Visioni* (Rime 323)” in *Petrarch and His Readers in the Renaissance*, ed. Karl AE Enenkel and Jan Papy. (Boston: Brill Publishing, 2006), 233-250. G.W. Pigman, “DuBellay’s Ambivalence towards Rome in the *Antiquitez*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* (1982); Wayne Rebhorn, “Du Bellay’s Imperial Mistress: Les Antiquitez de Rome as Petrarchan Sonnet Sequence,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 33:4 (1980), 609-622; David Russell, “Du Bellay’s Emblematic Vision of Rome” *Yale French Studies* 47 (1972), 98-109.

³. “Complaints,” 71-72. All Bible passages in this chapter quoted from *The Geneva Bible 1560 Edition*, ed. Lloyd Berry, (Hendrickson Bibles Press: Peabody MA, 2007).

Though the *Complaints* (1591) – the volume in which the “Ruines” appears – have been recognized as central to Spenser’s theory of poetics, the “Ruines of Time” is often read as lacking in the grace and complexity of Spenser’s other works.⁴ It has been described by A. DeNeef as “nothing more than a commissioned elegy on Sir Philip Sidney hurriedly combined with an unimpressive redaction of du Bellay’s *Antiquites de Rome*.”⁵ The poem divides roughly into three seemingly unrelated movements: a complaint lamenting the ruination of the ancient British city of Verulamium, modeled on the French laments for Rome by Joachim du Bellay and Petrarch; a fairly standard *aere perennius* defense of poetry’s status as a monument that can perpetuate its subject into eternity; and a triumphant praise of the recently deceased Philip Sidney in a series of visions that depict his apotheosis and ascent to Heaven. It consequently portrays the ruination of time and history, and the resurrection of the late Sidney, with an almost monotonous repetitiveness that seems to have no intentional narrative structure; for what, indeed, does Verulamium’s ruin have to do with Sidney’s triumphal resurrection?

I shall argue that the poem’s iterative disjointedness belies a complex unifying religious theme that ties these three seemingly disparate poetic assertions together into one remarkably sustained Scriptural trope. In this chapter, I broaden the inquiry into the Revelation narrative in the poem to include the events before and after the defeat of the apocalyptic Rome in Scripture. While Rome’s destruction brings with it the oblivion of all things within the temporal sphere, that devastation is merely the precursor to something better – namely, the Second Coming of Christ, who brings with him eternal life in the City of God, where God’s people dwell in peace with him forever. This City of God is the consummation of the Church in history, whose

⁴ Richard Danson Brown, *‘The New Poet’: Novelty and Tradition in Spenser’s Complaints*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 2.

⁵ A. Leigh De Neef, “The Ruins of Time: Spenser’s Apology for Poetry” in *Studies in Philology* 76:3 (1979), 262-271. 262.

presence entered the earthly world with Christ's redemptive work on the cross, and promised the complete restoration of creation at the end of time. Because of this, the ruination of time is a paradoxical necessity for eternity's triumph.

"The Ruines of Time" relies on this redemptive arc of Christian history for its poetic analogy, and Spenser uses this narrative to craft a defense of his poetry's ability to "eternize" the memory of Philip Sidney. Though, as a Protestant, Spenser would not dream of the blasphemy of inscribing Christ-like powers to any mortal man – a sin of idolatry if ever there was one – he does, astonishingly, use Christological imagery as an analogy for describing the kind of figurative lasting power that poetry and poets bestow. Using deeply-embedded allusions to the Scriptural narrative of redemptive history, Spenser depicts Verulamium as the embodiment of earthly death, sin, corruption, and oblivion, which the Rome of Revelation represents, and which threaten historical lastingness. In this context, however, Spenser depicts poetry as a redemptive force that can revive and restore the lives of those doomed to oblivion in this world. He then, in this framework, recuperates Sidney's untimely demise by identifying him as a Christ-figure who can harness this poetic power, and whose death leads to resurrection and, through it, to the arrival of the City of God and its promise of eternal life. Sidney's presence restores the landscape of Verulamium within the poem, creating the promise of hope and eternal possibility through poetry in spite of earthly oblivion.

In this manner, Sidney becomes the lynchpin of the argument and the source of Spenser's own poetic powers, for Spenser's identification of Sidney as Christ in the poem allows him to extend that eternizing work to himself as the poet. Spenser casts himself and the community of his poetic contemporaries as the church left behind by Sidney, who uses their poetry to work toward the future City of God. These poets do so by propagating the memory of the dead Sidney

in their own poetry, continuing his redemptive work until the end of time. In this conception, Spenser becomes an apostle of this poetic church, whose power both comes from Sidney and continues the work of Sidney, creating eternal life through poetry in spite of the world's ruination. Spenser thus uses the eschatological portrayal of Sidney as the Christ to justify his poetic endeavor, and promote himself as a worthy minister of Sidney's cause.

Reading "The Ruines of Time" through the theological framework of the Revelations Church builds on conversations about the meaning and purpose of ruination imagery in Spenser's work. Roman ruins raise questions about whether poetry can outlast the earthly death to which all the rest of the world is subject, or whether poetry provides a means of living forever in spite of death. Many critics see ruination imagery in Spenser as poetically productive, providing the raw visual material out of which Spenser crafts an argument for poetry's capacity to facilitate eternal life for its subjects. According to Anne Janowitz, "through the course of the sequence Spenser hints at the power and possibility of a poetic solution to physical decay by building each sonnet as a verbal version of architectural triumph," so that structurally, "the poem as a monument repairs its own ruin."⁶ More recently, in her book on the mnemonic uses of architectonic imagery, Rebeca Helfer has argued that the ruins imagery is crucial to "The Ruines of Time" because "Spenser locates immortality in ruin itself – in poetry's ruins – and the process of recollection."⁷ Helfer's reading demonstrates that, within the poem, space is created to allow for the "ongoing process of recollecting 'ruins'" of the past.⁸

⁶. *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape*. (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 1992), 2-29. She says of the Ruins of Time that "Verlame perpetuates the poet Sidney and so brings fame to her own ruins, which will now be "memorized" for monumentalizing the lost statesman and poet who died for his country's good – the poet whose own work promoted the nation as a good" (29).

⁷. "Remembering Sidney, Remembering Spenser: The Art of Memory and the Ruines of Time," in *Spenser Studies* 22 (2007), 127-184. 128. See also Helfer's book, *Spenser's Ruins and the Art of Recollection*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012). See also Leonard Barkhan, "Ruins and Visions: Spenser, Pictures, Rome" in *Edmund*

My reading connects reparative ruination with the religious, apocalyptic undertones of Spenser's work in the suggestion that the source of this paradoxical productivity is the theology of the Church in Christian eschatological history. It is clear that the apocalyptic narrative was crucial to early modern conceptions of English national identity, and with it the English Church during the period of Spenser's literary career.⁹ Post-Reformation Tudor England was attracted to what Andrew Escobedo has described as "a polarized view of the universe, a catastrophic explanation of events, and a firm concern with prophecy and its fulfillment" and "the belief in an imminent catastrophic end to evil."¹⁰ But, as discussed in Chapter 1, the focus on the destructive, catastrophic nature of Revelation misses the largely redemptive theme of the narrative. Escobedo claims that in reading history apocalyptically in an attempt to "reverse the impression of historical loss by imbuing English history with a divine inevitability," Elizabethans encountered "postmillennial foreclosure," a dynamic in which "England's recent success against the Antichrist – as the Reformers referred to the Roman Church – fuels the desire for a glorious

Spenser: Essays on Culture and Allegory, ed Jennifer K. Morrison and Matthew Greenfield. (Burling VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), 9-36.

⁸. "Remembering Sidney," 29.

⁹. See Carol Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); John King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*. (Boston: Routledge, 1984); Esther Richey, *The Politics of Revelation in the English Renaissance*. (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998).

¹⁰. *Nationalism and Historical Loss in Renaissance England: Foxe, Dee, Spenser, Milton*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 5. Escobedo, however, does differentiate between apocalyptic and "millennial" approaches to history— for him, "'apocalyptic' denotes the generic term and 'millennial' that species which posits a future, collective imminent transformation of life on earth through supernatural agency," but even then, "only those who expect a literal thousand-year reign of the saints on earth will merit the term 'millenarian' (7). Many historians see the defeat of the Spanish Armada as a major interpretive moment that signified Protestant apocalyptic triumph over Rome. See also Richard Baukham, *Tudor Apocalypse*. (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978); Bernard Capp, "The Political Dimension of Apocalyptic Thought" in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Patreides and Wittreich), 93-124; Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978); Katharine Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Richard Mallet, "Post-Armada Apocalyptic Discourse in Book V," in *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*. (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 143-168.

English future, but the expectation of an imminent, earth-destroyed Apocalypse closes off the national future.”¹¹ Though the “divine inevitability” of apocalyptic history proffers a sense of interpretive control, the inevitability of earth’s destruction that comes with it closes off the possibility of future redemption.

But reading Revelation in its broader narrative context as the paradoxical consummation of eternal redemption through earthly destruction should challenge this understanding of the role played by religious imagery in the poem. If we consider the Apocalypse as the necessary precursor to the fulfillment of the Church at the end of time, we find hope, not despair, and productivity instead of “foreclosure.”¹² Bringing this narrative to bear on Spenser’s poetic defense of himself and his work shows that this Biblical narrative produces not despair but hope and empowerment, and saves through poetry that which would otherwise be lost.

2. Verulamium and the City of Man

Far from being an anachronistic *paean* to earthly ruins at odds with the rest of the text, Verlame’s visions of her ruined past in the first third of the poem establish a narrative framework for Spenser’s larger argument, because they ground that argument in the images and themes of Revelation, the denouement of redemptive Christian history. Rome’s conquest of ancient Britain placed it under the rule and cultural hegemony of the capital city. In the same vein, Verlame declares “I was that Citie, which the garland wore / Of *Britaines* pride, delivered unto me / By *Romane* Victors, which it wonne of yore” (ll. 36-38). The city may wear the garland of

¹¹. *Historical Loss*, 22.

¹². This optimism may be born of his reading of du Bellay himself, whom Hassan Melehy credits with reworking the New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation. Indeed, he transforms it from a revenge fantasy into a hope of a continuation of poetry in the repetitions of cyclical time” (68). See *The Poetics of Literary Transfer in Early Modern France and England*. (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2010).

“*Britaines* pride,” but its identity comes through the “*Romane* Victors” whose conquest literally established its foundations. In this sense, Verulamium is a city of Rome, and Verlame’s claim turns this otherwise British city into a representative of its imperial mistress. This overlap of Britain and Rome allows the latter to stand in for the former, bringing with it onto the British landscape the historical detritus of its mother-city. In this depiction of Verulamium, Spenser establishes an imitation-Rome-by-proxy that can play with the questions of time, history, and lastingness that haunt images of Rome’s downfall.

Verulamium is coded not merely as the Rome of ancient history, but more specifically as the mythical Rome of Revelation, which finds religious eschatological meaning in the annihilation of the temporal world. In her lament for the loss of the mighty cities of ancient history, Verlame asks of Rome “[W]here is that same great seven headed beast / That made all nations vassals of her pride, / To fall before her feete at her behest / ... With her own weight down pressed now shee lies / And by her heaps her hugeness testifies” (ll. 71-76). By identifying Rome as the “seven headed beast,” she introduces into the narrative a conception of Rome – and, by proxy, the Roman Verulamium – as the Beast of Revelation 17, when John sees “a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, which had seven heads, and ten horns.” This woman is later identified as the “great Babylon that mother of whoredoms, and abominations of the earth.”¹³

This identification suggests that Verulamium’s destruction is a direct result of Rome’s fall in Revelation. And indeed, Verlame makes it clear that this Rome’s ruin is her own: “O *Rome* thy ruine I lament and rue, / And in thy fall my fatall overthrowe, / That whilom was, whilst heavens with equall vewe / Deignd to behold me, and their gifts bestowe, / The picture of

¹³. See also Revelation 13:1-10 for the Beast’s first appearance. Verses 3-5. Revelation was written in 59 AD; the city itself would be sacked in 410 AD.

thy pride in pompous shew” (ll. 78-84). A lament for the Beast’s ruin is also a lament for her own “fatall overthrow,” caught up in her mother-city’s fall, because as Rome’s proxy, Verulamium is a “picture” of Rome itself. She does not merely rival or imitate Rome’s pride in Revelation; she is an image of it.

Revelation’s narrative is, at its core, a story about the triumph of eternity that comes, paradoxically, out of the very destruction of the temporal world and all it stands for – sin, corruption, and death. And in the Protestant narrative, the Church of Rome is the chief persecutor of the true Church.¹⁴ It stands for all earthly sin and corruption that, as a consequence of the sinfulness that has pervaded earthly time since the Fall of man, threatens to destroy God’s people.¹⁵ The Beast in Revelation is accompanied by the Whore of Babylon (Rome’s predecessor), and they are marked by “abominations” and “blasphemy,” symbolizing the corruption, arrogance, and sin that dominates the earthly realm and mars God’s good creation.¹⁶

¹⁴. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza points out that Revelation is often read and focused on by Christian communities in the modern world who are experiencing persecution. (*Revelation: Vision for a Just World*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991). Cited in Stephen Friesen, Chapter 13, “Revelation in this World,” in *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). For overviews of the Book of Revelation and its later reception, see Mark Stephens, *Annihilation or renewal? : the meaning and function of new creation in the book of Revelation*. (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Stephen Pattemore, *The People of God in the Apocalypse : discourse, structure, and exegesis*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also Paul Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: an introduction to the visions of the Apocalypse*. (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), especially the chapter on “The Significance of Suffering” (202-213), which argues that persecution was just assumed as part of the texture of the early Church. Steven Friesen, in fact, even goes so far as to argue that the initial audience for Revelation that were literally situated within the symbolic ruins of an empire that had, in turn, attempted to ruin them. For Friesen, the imperial cults of Rome created a pervasive “eschatological absurdity” in which “the image of the emperor” that appeared in cultic worship sites became examples of their own failure because they “could not signify, could not point to a greater reality, because this symbolism would imply his own finitude. Imperial rule could not partake in the symbolic nature of all human projects because this would imply its eventual demise” (137).

¹⁵. See Daniel 7, which describes different parts of the lion, bear, leopard, and horns as features of the beast. See also Isaiah 17:12- for echoes of the beast coming out of the sea.

¹⁶. The portrayal of Rome as the Beast in Revelation 17 alludes to Daniel’s apocalyptic vision in the Old Testament of the political rule of kingdoms that would rise up against the people of God, including Babylon, who had previously subjugated the people of Israel.

Rome is also characterized in Revelation by the oblivion to which it will eventually succumb. Christ does battle with the Whore of Babylon and the Beast, and dooms them to eternity in Hell. John describes seeing

The beast, and the Kings of the earth, and their warriors gathered together to make battel against him that sate on the horse and against his souldiers. But the beast was taken, and with him that false prophete that wrought miracles before him, whereby he deceived them that received the beastes marke, and them that worshiped his image. These bothe were alive cast into a lake of fyre, burning with brimstone. (Revelation 19:19-20)

These martial events precede Christ's return and the Last Judgement of the living and the dead (Revelation 20: 11-15), after which John reports seeing "a new heaven & a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, & there was no more sea" (Revelation 21:1).¹⁷ Rome's fall heralds the end of time-bound creation itself. The "passing away" of heaven, earth, and sea reverses the creation story in Genesis, where God "created the heaven and earth. And the earth was without forme and voyde, and darknes was upon the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2). This suggests that as the old heaven, earth, and sea pass away, creation returns to something like its nascent state, where it is "without form" or meaning. It is sent back to the "voyde," and loses its existence.

Turning back to the Roman vision in *Verulamium*, we can see that its identity is inflected by this Biblical narrative. In the visions at the end of the poem, the speaker sees iterations of *Verulamium*'s ruin in images associated with Rome's predecessor, Babylon – the altar of "th'*Assyrian* tyrant," Nebudchadnezzar (l. 496), the "statelie Towre" that recalls the tower of Babylon (l. 505), even its "Paradize"-like gardens (l. 519).¹⁸ In each iteration, Babylon rises in the first stanza only to be destroyed in the second, recalling the destruction of the Roman beast

¹⁷. This scene is depicted in the last of the woodcuts, which appear in Van Der Noot's *Theater for Worldlings* (1569).

¹⁸. The exception being Colossus of Rhodes (533).

and the Whore of Babylon in Revelation. Indeed, Spenser even evokes the prophetic style of John in Revelation as he reports that while standing by the ancient site “before mine eies strange sights presented were” (l. 489), and as with John, an angelic guide presents these visions to him and “Bad me, to the other side / To cast mine eye, were other sights I spide” (ll. 587-588). This thematically links the Rome of Verulamium to the Babylonian undertones of Rome in Revelation, suggesting that it shares the latter’s role as the persecutor of God’s people. Verulamium in the poem becomes the touchstone upon which Spenser grounds his meditation on the fruitlessness of trying to sustain everlasting life in a temporal world doomed to oblivion. The landscape expresses doubt about the lastingness of earthly things, and seems to represent not so much ruins, as what ruins signify – loss and oblivion. As Rebeca Helfer has pointed out, there are no real ruins described in the text; indeed, the speaker states that in the place he stands, “there now remains no memory / Nor any little monument to see” that would indicate a city ever stood there (4-5).¹⁹ The landscape is described by what is *not* there – “*no* memory ... *nor* ... monument.” Even in the vision of the ruined city there is nothing but “an heap of lyme and sand” on which the screech owl now lives (ll. 127-133). It is as if the landscape does not merely lack those things, but actively works to dismantle both memory and monument. Verulamium is identified as an absence, an oblivion from history, and she expresses those states as the result of historical ruination. Verlame, the genius-nymph who is the only real feature of the landscape, claims that “Name have I none (quoth she) nor anie being, / Bereft of both by Fates unjust decreeing” (ll. 34-35).²⁰ The fates – the mistresses of time and death – have, by destroying

¹⁹. “Remembering Sidney,” 129. Helfer claims that the ruins are the poem that aspires to permanence through recollection of what was lost.

²⁰. I call her Verlame as per tradition that she is the genius of the City, and for clarity, but she has no name and is only ‘like’ the genius, which suggests that this is not actually her name.

Verulamium, taken away her name, her identity, and her very physical being. She is identified as Verlame only because of who she used to be: “Verlame I *was*; what bootes it that I was, / Sith now I am but weeds and wastfull gras?” (41-42).²¹ She *was* Verlame, and the past-tense existence of her identity demonstrates how time has erased not only who she was, but also the significance of that identity, since now “what bootes it that I was?” That cynicism about her present significance expresses the fear of earthly time’s impact – that in erasing the physical markers of the past, it can take away its identity and its meaning, assigning it to total oblivion.

In its loss of existence, Verulamium is a representation of time’s corruption. Verlame’s description of the city’s destruction borrows liberally from the strain of wisdom literature in Scriptures that defines human endeavors as vanity. Following this meditation on the city’s downfall and erasure, Verlame laments

O vaine worlds glorie, and unstedfast state,
Of all that lives, on face of sinfull earth,
Which from their first until their utmost date,
Taste no one hower of happiness or merth,
But like as at the ingate of their berth,
They crying creep out of their mothers womb,
So wailing back go to their wofull tomb.

Why then dooth flesh, a bubble glas of breath,
Hunt after honour and aduancement vaine,
And reare a trophee for devouring death,
With so great labour and long lasting paine,
As if his daies for ever should remaine?
Sith all that in this world is great or gaie,
Doth as a vapour vanish, and decaie. (ll. 43-56)

The city’s destruction prompts a lament for the inevitable loss of the “vaine worlds glorie, and unstedfast state,” indicating the “vaine” belief “of all that lives” that achievements “on face of sinful earth” will somehow last. Vanity in this sense is the attempt to create anything lasting in the world when death is inevitable. Death is the great reverser of creation: all life “crying creep

²¹. Emphasis mine.

out of their mothers' womb" only to go "wailing back to their wofull tomb," an image that rhymes "womb" and "tomb" to suggest that birth itself is inevitably swallowed up in death. The "tomb" reverses the "womb," like Revelation's reversal of Genesis in the "passing away" of all things.²²

This reversal points to the Biblical theme of vanity, the understanding of death's inevitability. Verlame's focus on the "vaine" world identifies this inevitable defeat as the end result of the "sinfull earth," recalling when Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, laments "Vanitie of vanities, saith the preacher, vanitie of vanities, all is vanitie. What remaineth unto man in all his travail, which he suffreth under the sunne?" (1:2).²³ The vanity of all human endeavors marked by sin and death is responsible, as Verlame implies, for the end of Verulamium as well, and her reference to Ecclesiastes in this stanza does not describe merely the sorrow she feels at her city's demise, but also its cause. In her preceding stanza, she links her namelessness and loss of self to the fact that she is now merely "weedes and wastfull gras." This description hearkens back to Isaiah's claim, in continuation of the theme of Ecclesiastes, that "all flesh is grasse ... the grasse withereth, the floure fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grasse" (40:1). The landscape of Verulamium is infused with Biblical illustrations of vanity, and it demonstrates the effects of sin and death upon the world.

Verulamium's status as a representation of the City of Man's doom and decay is exhibited vividly by the most unstable feature of the poem – the river that runs through Verulamium. Lawrence Manley has eloquently argued that the "changeful" river in the poem

²². See also *FQ* Book I and the personification of Error.

²³. The "bubble glas of breath" also recalls, as Oram points out, James 4:14, which asks "For what is your life? It is euen a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and afterward vanisheth away." (Note on lines 48-59, 235).

“evokes the utter vanity of human desire” that fades with all corrupt human endeavors.²⁴ But its mutability is merely a reflection of the *effects* of that corruption – namely, the erasure of existence that is promised to the temporal world. At the beginning, the speaker describes himself as standing by the Thames “nigh where” Verlame was (ll. 2-3). The Thames was only mythically linked to Verulamium in the past; in actuality its course runs nowhere near the ruins of the city.²⁵ Yet the speaker is clearly standing by the river after its destruction, where he describes Verulamium as a blank spot on the landscape, a city “of which there now remaines no memorie / nor anie little moniment to see” (ll. 4-5). The Thames seems to be perpetually obviating itself, reflecting the ruination exhibited by the lost city; it, like Verlame, is constantly in a state of not being present on the landscape. Verlame confirms later that “there now no rivers course is to be seene / But moorish fennes, and marshes ever greene” (ll. 139-40). The repeated phrase “there now ... no” to describe city and river demonstrates this oblivion: while both exist in the temporal state of “now,” in both instances that state is one of negation, and both times that state is a state of “not” being the way it used to be. “There” is used both to indicate its existence, with the implication of “there now is no river,” as well as a descriptor of the river’s place “there” on the landscape. Its doubled usage muddles its purpose, dissolving its linguistic meaning as the sense of place is blended with its indication of a particular state. In this manner, the river, like the city itself, dissolves out of the poetic landscape as a marker of place. Rather, it becomes a physical

²⁴. “Spenser and the City: The Minor Poems,” in *Modern Language Quarterly* (1982), 202. For Manley, however, this is a sign that Spenser moves with increasing confidence toward an acceptance of historic change, purged of his youthful apocalyptic hysteria” (211).

²⁵. For illustration, see “Rivers of Hertfordshire” in Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* (1612), 145. See Figure A. Meredith Donaldson Clark has also unearthed a minor 1590 poem by William Vallans entitled “*A tale of two swannes*” which “features swans who, on their journey along the river Lea through Hertfordshire to London, pass “not farre from ancient Verolame.” “The land speaks’: John Shrimpton’s *Antiquities of Verulam and St Albans* and the making of Verulamium.” in *Forms of association: making publics in early modern Europe* ed. Paul Yachnin and Marlene Eberhart (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 176-93.

manifestation, or an imaginative placeholder on the landscape, of the absence of lastingness in the temporal world. Its place in the poem suggests that the very landscape upon which Verulamium appears is nothing but the incarnate manifestation of its eventual destructive end.

3. Sidney, Poetry, and the City of God

This wholly nihilistic view of earthly time seems to be an odd foundation upon which to build a defense of poetry. If all earth is doomed to oblivion, why use earthly time and history as the basic imagery with which to argue for poetic lastingness? The answer is in the eschatological purpose of the temporal world's ending in the larger narrative of Revelation, and in how it appears in "The Ruines of Time."

Despite the threat of formless non-existence after the defeat of Rome, in Revelation the end of all time and creation is necessary for the triumph and life everlasting of those whom Rome had persecuted. The passing of the old heaven and earth makes way for the focal point of his vision: "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:21). This new creation brings about the exact antithesis of the old creation: peace, joy, holiness, and the eternal presence of God amongst his people. John says of the new creation:

I, John, sawe the holie citie newe Jerusalem come downe from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride trimmed for her housband. And I heard a great voyce out of heaven saying, Beholde, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he wil dwell with them, and they shalbe his people, and God him self shalbe with them. (Revelation 21:3-4).

The new creation is marked out by everything lacking in the old creation: in the place of death and oblivion, here is "no more death"; life will reign forever. The repeated negatives stress the extent to which the new creation cancels out all that was associated with the old creation – God's new creation reverses the damage done by the now-lost earthly world. It "comes *down*" from heaven to the new earth, effectively taking up the physical, geographical space where the old

creation once existed. This new creation is depicted as the City of God that overtakes and replaces the City of Man.²⁶ John describes being shown in the new creation “the great citie, holie Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God.” Jerusalem was the original city of the people of Israel, through whom God began his work of restoration. It was the site of the original Temple and the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the promise in the Abrahamic Covenant that Israel would be God’s people, and God would be their God. Its presence at the heart of the Holy of Holies, the inner Temple in Jerusalem, signifies God’s presence amongst his people.²⁷ In this city, all the markers of that Temple are present again in the flesh, as “the Lord God almightie and the Lambe are the Temple of it” (Revelation 21:22).

Revelation marks the end of creation’s gradual progress toward final restoration through the work of God’s people, Christ the Messiah, and the Church his Body. In the Christian tradition, the arrival of eternity with Christ’s Second Coming ends the long period in which the Church continued Christ’s redemptive work while anticipating his final reign. That anticipation and culmination is repeatedly described in terms of a marriage. John describes the New Jerusalem as a “bride adorned for her husband,” and as the New Jerusalem makes its first appearance, John’s guide says “I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he caryed me away in the spirit to a great and hie mountain, and shewed me that great citie, the holie Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:9). This description of Jerusalem as a bride recalls the relationship between Christ and the Church in the New Testament, which is often described as a marriage. In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul, for example, claims that the

²⁶. The term “City of Man” actually originates with Augustine, who uses it to describe the earthly world in the City of God. I use it here then as a way of describing the earthly, temporal world. See *The City of God*, ed. G.R. Evans. (New York: Penguin Press, 2003), 5.

²⁷. Margaret Baker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem*. (London: SPCK, 1991), 17.

“husband is the wives head, even as Christ is the head of the Church,” and exhorts husbands to “love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church, and gave him self for it” (Ephesians 5:22-33).²⁸

Understanding the New Jerusalem as the consummation of the Church’s work in history had a massive impact on Reformation conceptions of the Protestant Church – which, after all, saw itself as the continuation of the true, original Church after the period of Catholic heresy.²⁹ It helped Protestants make sense of their persecution by Catholics, interpreting their harassment as the result of being part of the future City of God while still living in the City of Man. John Calvin, in book IV, chapter 2 of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, uses Revelation’s cities to define Protestantism as the “true” Church in opposition to Catholicism, the “false” Church of the world. He describes the difference between Catholicism (associated with Rome) and Protestantism (associated with Jerusalem) by saying that

Jerusalem is to be distinguished from Babylon, the Church of Christ from a conspiracy of Satan, by the discriminating test which our Saviour has applied to them, ‘He that is of

²⁸. The marriage metaphor is often a way in the New Testament to talk about the world’s coming redemption. The Church must act in anticipation of Christ’s coming by being his representative on earth and living out the characteristics of the New Jerusalem – hope, charity, peace -- to help bring about its arrival. Jesus himself explained this dynamic in a parable in the Gospels, describing the faithful in the Church as ten virgin bridal attendants who, while waiting for the Bridegroom, must stay alert and keep their torch burning or risk missing the wedding (Matthew 25). Their work in furthering Christ’s redemption through the spread of the Gospel, the feeding of the hungry and tending to the sick, are all preparations for the culmination of Christ’s work in the second Coming, just as attendants prepare for a wedding. As the focal point of a metaphorical wedding, the New Jerusalem in Revelation is the fulfillment of the Church in history. See Also Matthew 22, in which the Kingdom of Heaven is like a wedding where those without proper feasting clothes are thrown out. He also compares the coming Kingdom of God, the New Jerusalem to a wedding feast to which any and all are welcome, when the original invitees mistreat the messengers sent to invite them (Luke 14).

²⁹. This influence can largely be traced to Augustine’s foundational *City of God*, which traces the history of the City of God as it appeared in what he referred to as the City of Man – and claimed that eternity has broken into history and is moving towards its final redemption (928). Calvin borrowed heavily from Augustine’s theology, and in turn influenced prominent English Protestants who shaped the English Church as Spenser knew it. For more on Augustine’s influence on Spenser and the English Reformation, see Ake Bergvall, “Between Eusebius and Augustine: Una and the Cult of Elizabeth,” in *English Literary Renaissance* 21:1 (1997), 3-30. 3; “The Theology of the Sign: St. Augustine and Spenser’s Legend of Holiness,” in *Studies in English Literature* 33:1 (1993), 21-42; Gretchen Minton, “Civitas to Congregation: Augustine’s Two Cities to John Bale’s Image of Both Churches” in *History, Apocalypse, and the Secular Imagination: New Essays on Augustine’s City of God: Proceedings of a Colloquium held at Green College*. (Bowling Green OH: Philosophy Documenting Center, 1999), 237-256.

God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.' In short, since the Church is the kingdom of Christ, and he reigns only by his word, can there be any doubt as to the falsehood of those statements by which the kingdom of Christ is represented without his sceptre, in other words, without his sacred word?"³⁰

This Calvinist tenet was one factor in the rise of Protestantism in England, particularly in the period of its consolidation following the Marian Exile, when the theology of the Church of England as Spenser would have known it was being formed. The early Protestant writer John Bale railed against the Roman Catholic Church, proclaiming in his polemical *Image of Both Churches* that "either we are citizens in the New Jerusalem with Jesus Christ, or else, in the superstitious Babylon with Antichrist the Vicar of Satan."³¹ Such language was not mere hyperbole, but evinces a belief that the English Church played a prominent role in the end times. *Christus Triumphans* (1556), John Foxe's early Latin comedy, is an apt example of this. It depicts "the persecutions of Ecclesia, with which that unhappy old devil, from the time he was driven from heaven by Christ, never stopped harassing the Bride of Christ."³² But Ecclesia, for Foxe, is in this case explicitly the English Church, which seems to be marked for greatness in bringing about the world's final redemption. What is more, that redemption is tied inextricably to Protestantism. Foxe writes to encourage persecuted English Protestants, whom he sees as the true "Ecclesia," to maintain faith because the fulfillment of Christ's promise is at hand. In his dedicatory epistle, Foxe claims that "perhaps it will not be long before stage representations will lie neglected; then indeed we will see all with our own eyes, when God sends in actual fact what

³⁰. Trans. Henry Beveridge. (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 72.

³¹. Cited in Gretchen Minton's ed., *John Bale's The Image of Both Churches*, (New York: Springer Press, 2013), 37. See also Claire Falck, "Heavenly Lineaments and the Invisible Church in Foxe and Spenser," *Studies in English Literature* 53:1 (2013), 1-28.

³². *Two Latin Comedies by John Foxe the Martyrologist*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 207. 229. For more on *Christus Triumphans*, see Chapter 1.

he now only promises.”³³ His optimism is born from the hope that these divine “promises” were about to come to fruition just as the English Church pivoted toward Protestantism.

To see glimpses of the “New Jerusalem” of Revelation in Spenser’s *Verulamium*, then, suggests that these questions about the English Church and its role in bringing about the City of God are central to his thematic trope. In Spenser’s poem, *Verulamium*’s oblivion is the groundwork for his actual defense of poetry as a redemptive force that not merely transcends earthly corruption and oblivion but actually reverses it. While *Verulamium* as a landscape bears all the marks of death and oblivion, Spenser depicts poetry as a force capable of defeating those markings because it ensures not just perpetual memory but a figural resurrection of the very person deceased. And as is typical of Renaissance poetics, he does this by submerging the Christian themes within classical *topoi* that demonstrate resurrection.³⁴ Verlame praises the Muses, symbolic of poetry, for having “raised” both “the puissant brood / Of golden girt *Alcmena*, for great merite, / Out of the dust, to which the *Oetean* wood / Had him consum’d, and spent his vitall spirite,” and also “faire *Ledaes* warlick twinnes, / And interchanged life unto them lent, / That when th’one dies, th’other then beginnes / To shew in Heaven his brightnes orient” (ll. 379-389). Poetry creates eternal life for those who have died by vouchsafing their names and stories in myth forever. Hercules, “the puissant brood of golden girt *Alcmena*,” and “faire *Ledaes* warlick twines,” Castor and Pollux, are assured eternal fame through poetry,

³³. *Christus Triumphans*, 229.

³⁴. One common defense for this practice in the Renaissance is that, in the *translatio empirii* from classical to Christian empire, classical myth has Christian relevance as allegories. This practice originated even earlier with Augustine, who in the *De Doctrina Christiana*, described the practice as a literary *spoliatio aegyptiorum*, or “spoils of Egypt; just as the Israelites were commanded to take the goods of Egypt with them, so also “when the Christian separates himself in spirit from their miserable society, he should take this treasure with him for he just use of teaching the Gospel,” (Book I, sect. 40). Trans D.W. Roberston. (New Jersey: Library of Liberal Arts, 1997), 75. According to John Wall, “The Reformers’ strategies, as old as Augustine or Prudentius, are to undercut the claims of the classical tradition by juxtaposing them with Christian claims even while adopting the forms and linguistic strategies of the classical writers.” *Transformations of the Word*. (Athens: University of Georgia, 1988), 79.

because their lives have been preserved in myth through the poetic retelling of their deaths. This poetic preservation is described as a literal, bodily resurrection from the dead: Hercules, who self-immolated on Mt. Oeta, is “raised” out of the dust, or ashes, of his funeral pyre. The description of his rise “out of the dust” recalls the association between dust and death established in Genesis, when under the curse, man is told “thou art dust, and to dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19).³⁵ Poetry reverses this deathly state, figuratively restoring him to life. The trope of death’s reversal, the paradoxical switch in which death leads to life, is the key to poetry’s transformative power. Castor and Pollux, for example, are in a perpetual state of transformation, as they exist in an “interchanged” state in their constellation, where “when th’one dies, th’other then begins” (l. 388). This refers to the myth that Pollux, the immortal brother, asked Zeus to allow them to share his immortality in the sky when Castor was killed, existing in a binary state in the stars, where one waxes more brightly as the other wanes. Their mythic existence in the sky is dependent on death giving rise to life; without one’s “death,” the other cannot live. Poetic eternity in Verulamium, then, not only exists in *spite* of death, it is a resurrected life that periodically *reverses* the damages of death. Poetry is to the historical loss embodied by Verulamium what the City of God is to the City of Man, as the City of God negates the damage done in the earthly realm of the corrupt Rome.

The Christian undertones of Verlame’s praise of poetic lastingness suggest that this is intentional. Though her exemplars all derive from classical mythology, Verlame codes her conception of poetic eternity in the language of Christological salvation. The power of poetry to raise the dead is personified as a salvific figure:

³⁵. This verse also serves as the basis of the “Order for the Burial of the Dead,” which asserts that the dead are “ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” See the *Book of Common Prayer*, ed. John Booty (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 309.

The seven fold yron gates of grislie Hell,
 And horrid house of sad *Proserpina*,
 They able are with power of mightie spell
 To breake, and thence the soules to bring awaie
 Out of dread darkeness, to eternall day,
 And them immortall make, which els would die
 In foule forgetfulnesse, and nameles lie. (ll. 372-389)

In her argument that poetry has the power to make men “immortall, which else would die,”

Verlame alludes to the Gospels to personify poetry as a Christ-like force. Poetry figuratively carries men from the underworld, the “horrid house of sad Proserpina,” to which they would otherwise be doomed to “dread darkness,” recalling the myth of the Greek Orpheus’ rescue of his wife Eurydice from the Underworld, giving poetry a figurative model. But poetry does so in a way that recalls Christ’s harrowing of Hell: the “seven fold yron gates of grislie Hell” is a reference to the image, first put forth in the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus, of Hell as a place with iron gates.³⁶ In this extra-Scriptural Christian tradition, Christ goes down to Hell between his death and resurrection, defeats Satan, and frees the souls of the righteous who had died before his coming.³⁷ It is this to which Verlame compares the power of poetry; like Christ, poetry can break the gates of Hell, “the soules to bring away.” The impact of this figurative salvation is a deliverance to eternal life that bears a striking resemblance to that of the City of God. Verlame invokes the presence of the City of God itself: her description of the “eternall day” to which these mythic figures are brought recalls the “everlasting day” in which the City of God will be bathed at its establishment at the end of time, indicating that poetry can bring eternity to bear

³⁶. *The Middle-English Harrowing of Hell and the Gospel of Nicodemus*, ed. William Hulme. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961).

³⁷. Though not in Scripture, the tradition survives in the Apostles’ Creed, which states that Christ “descended into Hell.” See also Matthew 16:18, the only other place where the Gates of Hell are talked of, when Christ threatens to smash them. The Harrowing of Hell is also affirmed in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* in #3 “Of the going down of Christ into Hell,” which states simply “As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also it is to be believed that he went down into hell.” In *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook*, ed. David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 60.

over time in the same way that the City of God can redeem the City of Man. By being described in Scriptural terms, poetry takes on a salvific power that allows it to work actively against the decay of time, promising restoration of what is lost on earth.

Verlame embodies this Christological personification of poetic power in the person of the late Philip Sidney. Spenser re-imagines Sidney's death after the Battle of Zutphen as a moment of holy, substitutionary sacrifice. Verlame explains that "ere his happie soul to heaven went / Out of this fleshlie goale he did devise / Unto his heavenlie maker to present / His bodie as a spotles sacrifice / And chose, that guiltie hands of enemies / Should powre forth th'offring of his guiltles blood: / So life exchanging for his countries good" (ll. 295-300). This lament for Sidney's death appropriates Sidney's life as a defender of Protestantism – which Spenser ties closely to his work in English poetry – and refashions him as a figure whose poetic work and identity have the power to restore his people. Sidney's death is Christ-like because it provides redemption for those he left behind – in this case, as the legacy of poetic and political superiority to which they aspire. The phrase "spotles sacrifice" recalls the image of Christ as the substitutionary sacrifice who, on the cross, fulfilled the need for Old Testament sacrifices for the sins of the people of God, as the "off"ring of guiltles blood" on behalf of sinners.

This stanza eulogizes Sidney's death while fighting for the cause of Protestantism and advancing England's national interests. But this imaginative recuperation also connects Sidney to Christ's place in the narrative arc that ends in Revelation, because it identifies him as the "Lamb of God" who figures so prominently in Revelation. Sidney's description as a "spotless sacrifice" in this passage provides a means by which Sidney might take part in the Scriptural analogy that Spenser so heavily integrates into the argument of the poem. The phrase "spotless sacrifice" alludes to 1 Peter, in which Christian redemption is described as deriving from "the precious

blood of Christ, as of a Lamb undefiled, and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). It is for this reason that Jesus is posed throughout Scripture as “that Lamb of God which taketh away the sinne of the world” (John 1:29), and Christ’s second coming is depicted as the coming of the Lamb in Revelation – the event heralded by the fall of Rome in Revelation 20. In his sacrificial death, then, Sidney’s persona is likened to Christ’s as the Lamb, who at the end of time brings with him the redemption of creation with the coming of the City of God.

That redemption is accomplished through Sidney’s role as a poet. Verlame addresses Sidney as

Most gentle spirite breathed from above
 Out of the bosome of the maker’s blis
 In whom all bountie and vertuous love
 Appeared in their native propertis
 And did enrich that noble breast of his
 With treasure passing all this worldes worth
 Worthie of heaven it selfe, which brought it forth. (ll. 281-7).

In this stanza, Spenser emphasizes Sidney’s identity as a gifted poet: the characterization of him as a spirit breathed out of the “maker’s” bliss recalls Sidney’s own description of poets in his *Defense of Poesy* as “makers.”³⁸ In that work, Sidney exhorts his readers to “give right honor to the Heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made man to his own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature. Which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing her doings.”³⁹ For Sidney, the poet is a “maker” because he is made in the image of the divine “Maker,” and poetry is the “divine breath” of God best put forth by his image. In Verlame’s invocation of the “breath” of the “Maker’s bliss,” then, Spenser uses Sidney’s own description of a poet to portray

³⁸. Ed. Jan Van Dorsten. (New York: Oxford, 1966). See also S.K. Heninger, *Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker*. (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1989).

³⁹. *Defense*, 24.

him as the epitome of the poet-as-maker, and establishes that he, too, sees poetry as a divine calling.

But the description of Sidney coming “out of the bosom of the makers blis” also appears in another, more obscure work of Spenser’s, *The Foure Hymnes* (1596).⁴⁰ In “An Hymne of Heavenly Love,” the appellation specifically refers to Christ, who “out of the bosome of eternall bliss, / In which he reigned with his glorious syre / He downe descended, like a most demiss / And abject thrall, in fleshs fraile attyre / That he for him might pay sinnes deadly hyre” (“Heavenly Love,” ll. 134-40). For Christ in this earlier work, the “bosom of eternall bliss” is with his “glorious syre,” the Father and Creator in the Holy Trinity, and his purpose is to “descend’ down into humanity to “pay sins deadly hire.” For Sidney to have come “out of the bosom of the makers blis,” then, suggests that he, too, is derived from the Father and Creator of the Holy Trinity, and that his identity is similarly salvific. Because this description of him recalls the Sidneian philosophy of divine poetry, Spenser is able to link the two, creating a characterization of Sidney in which his Christ-like nature is best expressed by his poetic role.

In that role, Sidney’s poetry assures himself a life eternal, which Spenser depicts as a figurative resurrection whose effects hold the promise of *poetic* redemption for those who follow him. In the poem’s ending visions, Sidney’s poetic identity is described as capable of promising eternity to others in the manner of the New Jerusalem. At the very end of the poem, the speaker describes seeing

[A]n Arke of purest golde
 Upon a brazen pillour standing hie,
 Which th’ashes seem’d of some great Prince to hold,
 Enclosde therein for endles memorie
 Of him whom all the world did glorifie:
 Seemed the heavens with the earth did disagree
 Whether should of those ashes keeper bee.

⁴⁰. Oram, 721-735. The reference is noted by Oram in a note on ll. 282, 244.

At last me seem'd wing footed *Mercurie*,
 From heaven descending to appease their strife,
 The arke did beare with him above the skie,
 And to those ashes gave a second life,
 To live in heaven, where happines is rife:
 At which the earth did grieve exceedingly,
 And I for dole was almost like to die. (ll. 659-672)

The description of Sidney's "second life" uses the language of Christian resurrection to argue that Sidney's poetry will glorify him in death. Mercury, the god of poetry and eloquence, bears the ashes of the "great prince," Sidney, whose glory as a poet grants him "endles memorie." The juxtaposition of the imagery of ashes with that of apotheosis and resurrection alludes to the mythical rebirth of the phoenix out of its own ashes. After his death, those who eulogized Sidney often characterized him as a phoenix whose work would last and give his legacy a new, eternal birth.⁴¹ In this sense, the poetry Sidney left behind gives him a "second life" in the eternity of "heaven," effectively resurrecting him from the dead.

The religious connotations of the "ark" also suggest that this resurrection of Sidney through his poetry does work similar to that of the larger redemptive narrative of Revelation. The "second life" of Sidney's ashes is not merely a static memorial to his works, but connotes the bodily resurrection of Christ from death through his ascension to Heaven to dwell with God. Though this ark refers to the coffin that holds Sidney's ashes, its proximity to images of resurrection and eternal life also evokes the Ark of the Covenant, which had symbolized God's future restored relationship with his people, and whose appearance in Revelation 11 fulfilled that promise. Like the ashes in the Ark, in the poem Sidney takes the place of the tablets of the Law, the Word of God that dwelt with God's people, Israel. Sidney goes not only to Heaven, but to the

⁴¹. The image became increasingly associated with Mary, Philip's literary executrix. See Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix*, 60, 80-81; see also the anonymously published *The Phoenix Nest* (London: Iohn Iackson, 1593).

very Temple, the seat of the Ark in the New Jerusalem, which places him as the center of poetry's power, just as Christ is the center of the City of God.⁴²

Sidney's figurative resurrection in the visions further suggests that his death will be the catalyst for a poetic redemption like that of the coming of the kingdom of God. Spenser turns at last to the trope of the Lamb's marriage in Revelation to describe Sidney's post-mortem existence.

Looking aside I saw a stately Bed,
Adorned all with costly cloth of gold,
That might for anie Princes couche be red,
And dect with daintie flowres, as if it shold
Be for some bride, her joyous night to hold:
Therein a goodly Virgine sleeping lay;
A fairer wight saw never summers day.

I heard a voyce that called farre away
And her awaking bad her quickly dight,
For lo her Bridegroome was in readie ray
To come to her, and seeke her loves delight:
With that she started up with cherefull sight,
When suddeinly both bed and all was gone,
And I in languor left there all alone. (ll. 631-644)

As William Oram suggests in his edition of the poem, it appears that Sidney, as the subject of the vision, is described as the Bride – the “goodly Virgine sleeping” upon the couch. This rather allegorical approach to the vision seems supported by the image's position within the stanza: the voice calling from far away structurally aligns with the actions of other heavenly beings in the previous stanzas that call or bear him up to heaven: The focal point of the first stanza, for example, is the “snowie Swan” that flies off to heaven from the river (590); the “Harpe” in the next stanza is “reard” out of another river (l. 610), while the “Curious Coffe made of Heben wood” is raised into the sky by descending angels in the next (l. 618). This suggests that the

Bride in this stanza is the focal point of the vision, and her disappearance symbolizes his ascent to heaven.

But in the context of the rest of the poem, Sidney in this stanza plays a more Christ-like role in that he brings about the consummation of the New Jerusalem on Earth at the end of time. The subject of the stanza seems to be the “stately Bed” upon which the speaker first lays eyes, and the speaker believes it “might for anie Princes couche be red,” indicating that its primary purpose is for a man of Sidney’s princely stature. The image of a prince in repose was often associated with the funerary monuments of great men, depicted reclining upon a couch. This “stately” bed, then, is Sidney’s deathbed.

But given Sidney’s status as the Lamb in the poem, any mention of the Bride must also suggest the Bridegroom of the Church’s marriage, the Lamb of God. In this spot, Sidney’s figurative body becomes the site of the consummation of the New Jerusalem as it comes down from heaven. The disappearance of the Bride at the end of this vision represents Christ being taken *up* into heaven, as “both bed and all were gone.” However, this disappearance signals less an action by the characters and more a statement that this vision is no longer given to the speaker, who is “in languor left there all alone.” Sidney’s couch remains stationary, while the marriage is promised to take place around it. As the Virgin, who is the Church in the Revelation marriage, waits upon the couch, the voice promises that the “Bridegrome was in readie ray / To come to her, and seeke her loves delight” (ll. 640-641). Rather than disappearing at the end of the vision, the bridegroom is coming *to* the bride, as the New Jerusalem in Revelation is described as coming *down* to earth. Sidney, the Lamb and Bridegroom, is depicted as coming down from heaven, where he already is, to the couch, the locus of his death. In this metaphor, Sidney the Christ-like Bridegroom and the Lamb of God, through his redemptive death and resurrection,

marries the Bride, the Church of Revelation. In this, Sidney the poet, in his death, brings about the coming of the New Jerusalem, into the poetic world of Verulamium, where the speaker mourns him. This is a crucial moment in which Spenser makes his case for Sidney's role in creating poetry that can vouchsafe eternity: his depiction of Sidney's death as the figurative locus of the City of God suggests that Sidney can thereby redeem that which is represented by the ruined landscape of Verulamium, the decay and oblivion of the temporal world. Astonishingly, Sidney is not merely an example of poetry lasting forever, but the cause, the catalyst, and the executor of the very powers of poetry itself upon the world of temporal loss.⁴³

Sidney's death in the poem proffers the hope of restoration after the loss of Verulamium. This power is performed in the very structure of the visions themselves. According to Anne Janowitz, the structure of each stanza set is intentional since "through the course of the sequence Spenser hints at the power and possibility of a poetic solution to physical decay by building each sonnet as a verbal version of architectural triumph, which is then intentionally 'ruined' by a closural couplet describing destruction."⁴⁴ But the poem gradually reveals itself to be enacting structural *restoration*, not destruction. Anne Lake Prescott has noted that, in the very middle of the *Theater for Worldlings*' version of the visions of Bellay, Spenser adds a fifteenth line where his predecessor, du Bellay, left only a break. That fifteenth line creates a sense of completion, and recalls the fifteen steps to the Temple of Jerusalem itself.⁴⁵ The poem, like the Temple, is a space of divine redemption even in its very architecture.

⁴³. As Millar MacLure put it, in the "Ruines of Time" oblivion is defeated by the eternizing power of the poet" (3). In "Spenser and the Ruines of Time," *A Theater for Spenserians* ed. Judith Kennedy (1969), 3-18.

⁴⁴. *England's Ruins*, 22. See also Helfer, "Remembering Sidney," 129-30.

⁴⁵. *French Poets*, 46. Prescott notes that fifteen is also the number of cubits above the land where Noah's Ark floats, and also the numerical symbol for baptism.

I would suggest that the same goes for the overarching structure of the visions themselves. The visions are divided into two sections – in the first six stanzaic couplets, each paired set of stanzas describes first the rise and then the fall of the Roman Verulamium. In the second six stanzaic couples, each paired set of stanzas describe Sidney's death, followed by his resurrection. Between the two groups of visions lies a two-stanza pause, in which the second group of visions is meant to recompense the first, as a voice directs the speaker to "Behold ... and by ensample see, / That all is vanitie and grieve of minde / Ne other comfort in this world can be / But hope of heaven, and heart to God inclinde; / For all the rest must needs be left behinde: / With that it bad me, to the other side / To cast mine eye, where other sights I spide" (ll. 581-588). While Verulamium's fall is posed as the "vanitie and grief of minde" in the earthly realm, the voice's exhortation to cast his eye to the "other sights" of Sidney's apotheosis aligns it with the comfort of "the hope of heaven, and heart to God inclinde." His resurrection is held out as a comfort against the afflictions of the world. It also sets up the portrayal of Sidney as the second half of a dichotomy within the visions. Structurally, Sidney's resurrection reverses the city's decay in the poem, as the chiasmic reversal of the action from rise-fall to fall-rise undoes Verulamium's ruin. The rising and falling action latent in the structure suggests that the climactic destruction of the City is only the set up to the real payoff – its defeat through Sidney's death and poetic resurrection.

As a result, Sidney's death and resurrection narratively transform the poetic landscape of Verulamium. Rather than a river that keeps disappearing in Verulamium, here in the Visions there is a river that keeps multiplying in meaning. The speaker describes seeing

Upon that famous Rivers further shore,
There stood a snowie Swan of heavenly hiew,
And gentle kinde, as ever Fowle afore;
A fairer one in all the goodlie crew

Of white *Strimonian* brood might no man view;
 There he most sweetly sung the prophecy
 Of his owne death in dolefull Elegie. (ll. 589-595)

The river in this vision encodes Sidney's poetic talent as a physical, geographical part of the City of God: he's figured as a "strimonian swan" who prophesies his own death in "song," suggestive of his own poetry. "Strimonian" refers to the swans in the river Strymon in Thrace where Orpheus was mourned, drawing a parallel between Sidney and Orpheus, to argue that the river is a symbol of his poetic power. This river is *also* "that famous Rivers further shore" – the "Further shore" in classical mythology connotes the river Styx, making it suggestive of the afterlife. But the origin here is heavenly, indicated by the "heavenly hiew" of the swan, suggesting that this river represents the afterlife of Heaven, not that of the Underworld. In John's vision of the New Jerusalem, the Lamb and the Throne are surrounded by the river of Life: the angel

Shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lambe. In the midst of the strete of it, and on ether side of the river, was there the tre of life ... and the leaves of the tree served to heale the nations with ... and there shall be no night there; and they nede no candle, nether light of the sunne; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shal reign for evermore. (Revelation 22:1)

In the framework already in place throughout the poem, the "heavenly" river upon which the swan floats thus recalls the river of life, which flows from the throne of the Lamb through the City of God. Here Sidney's own presence upon the Strimonian river invokes the river of Life's redemptive capabilities in the world of poetry.

This characterization of Sidney as inhabiting the heavenly river of the New Jerusalem creates the possibility for this river in the visions to redeem the river of Verulamium, and the loss that it signifies. In the subsequent vision, the speaker claims

Loe adowne the Lee,
 I sawe an Harpe stroong all with silver twyne
 And made of golde and costlie yvorie,
 Swimming, that whilome seemed to have been

The harpe, on which *Dan Orpheus* was seene
 Wylde bests and forests after him to lead,
 But was th'Harpe of *Philisides* now dead. (ll. 603-609)

Here he continues the comparison between Sidney (Philisides) and Orpheus, with the harp a symbol of their poetic prowess, leading “wild beasts and forests” as a sign of their civilizing force.⁴⁶ The image of a harp “swimming” down the river recalls the death of Orpheus at the hands of the maenads, after which his head and lyre were found floating down the Hebrus river. But the Lee that his lyre floats upon could potentially refer to two different rivers: on the one hand, there is the Lee of Cork, in Ireland, with which the Sidney family was associated, indicating that the river represents Sidney and his legacy.⁴⁷ On the other hand, there is the Lee that is a tributary of the Thames, the river that mythically flowed through Verulamium before disappearing to time in the poem. So Spenser plays on the doubled-existence of the two rivers Lee in English and Irish geography to suggest that by being an extension of both the Thames and of Sidney, the river Lee can re-create the river lost to Verulamium earlier in the poem. It creates and multiplies its meanings, as Spenser plays on the multiple significations of the Orpheus myth and Sidney’s own life to present a river in the visions that can restore the effects of corruption and decay in Verulamium. In bringing a meaningful river presence in the ruins of Verulamium, it also hearkens back to the River of Life that flows through the City of God, healing all things hurt by sin and death. This figurative River of Life appears to create meaning where previously there was none, undoing the erasure of the river Thames. Sidney, in the future hope of redemption

⁴⁶ See for example George Puttenham’s 1589 *Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne Rebhorn. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). Puttenham compares the poet’s role to that of a priest (96).

⁴⁷ Currently there is no consensus on which Lee is meant here. The Oram edition lists it as the Lee near Cork, Ireland (258), whereas the Penguin edition claims it as a tributary of the Thames *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard McCabe. (New York: Penguin, 1999), 591.

proffered by the visions after his death, brings a figurative restoration to the landscape of the poem.

In this manner, then, Spenser uses the trope of the coming New Jerusalem to argue that in his death, Sidney holds out the promise of eternal lastingness amidst the ruins of time. As the bringer of the New Jerusalem in the power of his poetry, Sidney is held up by Spenser as the poetic equivalent of the City of God, the means by which the historical loss associated with the City of Man in the poem's Verulamium might be restored. In light of his original intent stated in the dedicatory epistle, it appears that Spenser creates something of a pun on the genitive of the poem's title. He does not so much "eternize" Sidney through the "ruins of time," as depict Sidney himself *creating* the "ruins of time" through his eternizing power.

4. The Church of Philip Sidney and Spenser's Defense

The high-blasphemous presumption of this claim for Sidney's Christ-like role seems shocking in its audacity. However, this claim pales before the indomitable assertions Spenser makes of his and his fellow poets' ability to channel Sidney as his church. The trope of Sidney as Christ figure in the poetic City of God sets up the parameters for Spenser's defense not only of poetry, but of himself as an able and worthy poet. This is because it sets up post-Sidneian English poetry – and particularly *Spenser's* post-Sidneian poetry – as a church that does Sidney's work in the present. In this way, Spenser promotes himself to his potential patron, Mary Sidney Herbert, by claiming that in his poetry he is implementing the "eternizing" power of Sidney himself.

Despite his appearance in the visions, the poem establishes that Sidney's redemptive potential has not yet been fulfilled. Sidney's disappearance at the end of each vision stresses the lack of fulfillment in the distance between Sidney and his followers now that he is gone. In each

stanzaic pair, the second half emphasizes the impact of Sidney's resurrection in the poem on those left behind. As the swan in the first vision flies to heaven, for example, the speaker laments "Where now he is become an heavenly signe; / There now the joy is his, here sorrow mine" (ll. 601-602). Spenser submerges a brief pun on "signe" in this stanza, which homophonically resembles the French word for swan, *cygne*, indicating that Sidney's flight to the heavens renders him both a "cygne" and a "signe." The present tense of the verb is focused on the effects of Sidney's resurrection in this moment, and stresses that in his present state there is a difference between "where" he is relative to the speaker – there is joy "there now" for Sidney, while there is sorrow "here" for the speaker. This suggests that the visions are meant to provide an explanation for the present sufferer. Indeed, as the visions come to a close, the speaker stresses the feeling of having been left in the present and unable to participate in the resurrections depicted. The speaker complains at the end of the visions of being "in languor left there all alone," or "left ... here his loss for to deplore," or being "for dole almost like to die" at Sidney's removal from earth (ll. 644-672). The distress apparent in the speaker's sadness at being "left" behind indicates that the promise of final redemption through poetry is not yet fulfilled by Sidney's death alone.

Though his death holds out the promise of redemption, Sidney's redemptive potential – like the City of God itself – is fulfilled only in the future. Earlier in the poem, Verlame had made it clear that Sidney's death is in tension with the present state of things on earth. She describes his death thus:

Loathing this sinfull earth and earthlie slime,
Fled backe too soone unto his native place,
Too soone for all that did his love embrace,
Too soone for all this wretched world, whom he
Robd of all right and true nobilitie. (ll. 290-294)

Verlame's lament that Sidney died and left "too soon" describes his mourner's sense of loss after his untimely death. It also suggests a profound incompatibility between Sidney and the earthly realm. "Too soon" emphasizes that Sidney's death has left the promise of his redemptive poetics unfulfilled in the present moment. His death means that his poetry no longer has a place in the "wretched world" of earthly time, and cannot fit within the present moment. Sidney's death leaves a future-shaped hole in the present that frustratingly leaves the promise of his poetry in tension with the world of death it is meant to redeem.

Nevertheless, Verlame claims that those left behind upon his death will carry on his eternizing work through their own poetry, proffering the possibility of bringing his poetic redemption to save what would otherwise be lost to history. Though he now exists in the future, Verlame addresses the dead Sidney, saying

So there thou livest, singing evermore
 And here thou livest, being ever song
 Of us, which living loved thee afore,
 And now thee worship, mongst that blessed throng
 Of heavenlie Poets and Heroes strong
 So thou both here and there immortall art,
 And everie where through excellent desart. (ll. 337-343)

The separation between "here" and "there" suggests both the physical and temporal separation of Sidney from the earth and the present in death. However, the poetry of his followers allows him to live on in both places simultaneously. Sidney's essence on earth is kept alive by being "sung," or by being the subject of others' poetry. Their poetry, Verlame suggests, is "ever song" in the adverbial sense, in which Sidney is sung about forever by those whom he left behind. But in that poetry, Sidney is also the adjectival "*ever* song," the song of eternity. The "ever" nature of the song echoes Sidney's current place in heaven "evermore," as evidenced by the previous line, and suggests that he is their song which brings the state of eternity to earthly realms. Their song

makes him “immortal” both “here and there,” as it embodies his eternal essence here on earth even though he is gone. Their song about him, then, perpetuates his eternal state where he can no longer himself reside.

That perpetuation by his poetic followers is couched as the work of the Church. Though “song” here refers to poetry, it also alludes to the hymns and prayers of church, as Verlame refers to the singing of poetry as a form of “worship.” The poets are described as praising Sidney “mongst that throng” – a clause which at first seems to place Sidney in the center of “heavenly poets and heroes” in the fields of Elysium. But the clause “mongst that throng” is preceded by two similarly descriptive clauses that ultimately follow the true subject of that throng, the poets themselves, or “us, which living loved him afore.” The description of the “blessed throng” of heavenly poets and heroes amongst whom they worship recalls the Church Triumphant, the cloud of saints and witnesses who make up the heavenly multitude of God’s chosen people in eternity.⁴⁸ The poets then, by writing about and worshipping Sidney after his death, act like the Church on earth, extending Christ’s eternal work into the earthly realms.

The trope of the Church is central to Spenser’s defense of himself as a poet worthy of Pembroke’s patronage, because it allows Spenser to claim Sidney’s power and blessing for his own endeavors, by positioning himself as the leader of this poetic church. To do this, he uses Verlame’s complaint to further his own argument. Though identified at the end of the poem by his stand-in as the speaker, earlier in the poem Spenser subtly identifies himself as the voice of Verlame.⁴⁹ Verlame enumerates the poets who have neglected Robert Dudley, the earl of

⁴⁸. The term is perhaps more associated with the Catholic tradition than the Protestant; one of the most notable images that describes the gathering of saints in Heaven as the “blessed throng” is Dante’s description in Canto 19 of the *Paradiso*. See the *Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans Allen Mandelbaum. (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).

⁴⁹. Carl Rasmussen, however, argues that Verlame and Spenser the poet are two separate personae in the poem. See “How weak be the passions of woefulness”: Spenser’s “Ruines of Time,” in *Spenser Studies* Vol 2. (1981), 159-181.

Leicester, who was Sidney's uncle – and, more to the point, the man who employed Spenser as his secretary, and through whom he hoped to insinuate himself into the Sidney legacy. Verlame establishes their connection by upbraiding Spenser directly:

Ne doth his Colin, carelesse Colin Cloute,
 Care now his idle bagpipe up to raise,
 Ne tell his sorrow to the listning rout
 Of shepherd groomes, which wont his songs to praise:
 Praise who so list, yet will I him dispraise,
 Untill he quite him of this guiltie blame:
 Wake shepheards boy, at length awake for shame.

And who so els did goodness by him gaine,
 And who so els his bounteous mind did trie,
 Whether he shepheard be, or shepheards swaine,
 (For manie did, which doo it now denie)
 Awake, and to his Song a part applie:
 And I, the whilest you mourne for his decease,
 Will with my mourning plaints your plain increase. (ll. 225-238)

Colin Cloute, is, of course, Spenser's famous stand-in in *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579); here he is accused of failing to tell, as he did of others in the *Calender*, "his sorrow to the listening rout / of shepherd grooms" – in other words, of sharing poetry about Leicester with other poets.⁵⁰ Verlame threatens to "dispraise" Colin until he rectifies that oversight. This passage reads as a moment of self-reference, a knowing nod under the humble cover of "shame" on Spenser's part to the reader. Since that reader is Mary Sidney Herbert, the dedicatee of the poem, this move reminds her of his own significance to the propagation of her family's fame, thereby providing a means by which Spenser might address himself to her specifically, and defend his poetic potential as a thing of value to her and her family.

To accomplish this defense, Spenser aligns himself with Verlame's complaint as an active agent in the poem. Verlame addresses herself to all "shepheards and shepheards swains"

⁵⁰. Spenser was fond of referring to these fellow court poets as shepherds, as seen in *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579) and *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* (1591).

who gained from Leicester's patronage, and exhorts these swains to "apply themselves to his Song," or to write poetry for him. In that "mourning" work, Verlame promises to "increase" their complaints in her own lament – in other words, to amplify or echo them for more to hear. Indeed, after this promise, Verlame immediately returns to her complaint for Leicester in the next set of stanzas. This rehearsal of her theme suggests that the complaint that follows her promise is an "increase," or an amplification, of the poet she had recently upbraided – of Colin, and thus of Spenser himself. As Verlame broadcasts Colin's newly reintroduced complaint, Colin as Spenser's namesake can speak through Verlame to mourn Leicester's death in these stanzas. As Verlame speaks, then, so does Spenser in the poem, conflating his own authorial voice with hers, giving himself an active role in the poem through which his own poetic interests and powers might be demonstrated.

In that guise, Spenser positions himself as an apostle and leader of Sidney's poetic church. In Verlame's voice, Spenser exhorts the dead Sidney to:

Live there ever blessed,
 The worlds late wonder, and the heavens new joy,
 Live ever there, and leave me here distressed
 With mortall cares, and cumbrous worlds anoy.
 But where thou dost that happiness enjoy,
 Bid me, o bid me quicklie come to thee,
 That happie there I maie thee alwaies see. (ll. 303-308)

Spenser's physical separation from Sidney in the division between the earthly and spiritual realms defines Spenser's mission on earth. Spenser's desire that Sidney "bid me, o bid me quickly come to thee" echoes St. Peter, the founder of the Church, who in the Gospels asks Christ during the storm to "byd me come to unto Thee" on the waters if He is truly the Savior (Matthew 14:28). This request is meant in the Gospels to demonstrate both Christ's identity as the Messiah, and Peter's calling to found the Church that would come after Jesus' death and

resurrection. In this way, Spenser's acknowledgment of being left behind but desirous to follow Sidney to Heaven positions him to be part of the rise of the church of poets who comes after. The terms of his complaint align him with Paul in the later Epistles. His complaint that Sidney "leave[s] me here distressed / with mortall cares, and cumbrous worlds anoy," which sets up his desire to be "bid" quickly to come to Sidney in Heaven, subtly alludes to Paul's declaration in Philippians, as translated in both later editions of the Geneva Bible, and in English translations of Calvin's commentary on Philippians, that "Christ is to me both in life, and in death aduantage. And whether to liue in the flesh were profitable for me, and what to chose I know not. For I am greatly distressed between the two, desiring to be losed and to be with Christ, which is best of all. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (1:21-24).⁵¹ For Paul, his "distress" comes from a desire to be joined with Christ, to not be left on earth. Like Paul, Spenser finds himself "distressed" at being torn between heavenly residence with his Savior and "mortall cares, and cumbrous worlds annoy."

Spenser's anguish at separation similarly aligns his relationship with Sidney as like Paul's with Christ. It establishes him in the tradition of the apostle of the group of poets that Sidney left behind. In this, Spenser's lament is designed to situate him as the arbitrator of Sidney's figurative church and mission in the earthly poetry that came after him. In this position, Spenser channels Sidney's power on earth, as the Church channels Christ's power. Spenser's self-inscribed agency in the poem draws its power from the Christ-like Sidney and the church of

⁵¹ The historical link between the "distressed" translation and Spenser's use of the word here is somewhat speculative on my part past the mere similarity in sentiment. There is a slight variation in editions of the Geneva Bible over time; this translation is from the 1599 edition. In the 1560 edition, however, the verse is translated with Paul being "in doute" between the two (92). Calvin further says in the Philippians commentary: "*For I am distressed.*" Paule did not desire to lyue for anie other rewarde, then to serue to the glorie of Christe, and to profite hys brethren. Therefore hee esteemeth no other profite in thys lyfe, than the saluation of hys brethren: but for hymselfe priuately hee acknowledgeth that it is better to dye quicklie, because hee shoulde bee wyth Christ."

his followers. In the voice of Verlame, Spenser calls on the spirit of Sidney to grant him similar powers:

Yet whilst the fates affoord me vitall breath,
 I will it spend in speaking of thy praise,
 And sing to thee, until that timelie death
 By heavens doome doo ende my earthlie daies;
 Thereto doo thou my humble spirit raise,
 And into me that sacred breathe inspire,
 Which thou there breathest perfect and entire. (ll. 308-315)

Spenser claims, through Verlame, to be empowered to bring eternity into the present through his poetry, as an imitation of the Sidney-Christ. He says that his poetic power is directly received from Sidney himself: he extols the heavenly Sidney to “into me that sacred breathe inspire.” This call for “inspiration” evokes Sidney’s poetic abilities to inspire Spenser’s own. “Inspire” here recalls the word’s Latin meaning, “*in spiro*,” to breathe or fill with breath, as God did to man in Genesis, evoking Sidney’s god-like role as Maker and Creator in the poem. He further prevails upon Sidney as a poetic savior, calling on him to “raise” his spirits when Spenser joins him after life, as Christ resurrects the dead. In this context, as his follower, Spenser positions himself as the recipient of Sidney’s restorative poetic power.

This passage repeats the bold claim that Sidney is, in his Christ-like capacity, the source of poetry’s power in the earthly realms. But it does so by arguing that *Spenser* is the one whose poetry will implement it. In this stanza, the tenses shift between the clauses to indicate a temporal elision between Sidney’s heavenly realm and Spenser’s place on earth. Spenser’s petition starts by indicating his desire to be “thereto,” or in heaven, after his “timely death.” This description equally connotes a desire for a good death after long life, a sense of death as an exit from “timeliness” or earthly realms, and a contrast to the disjointedness of Sidney’s “too soon” death. This suggests that though Sidney cannot fit into the present, Spenser can.

Through his divine inspiration from Sidney, Spenser can channel Sidney's poetic power on earth to revive the dead in his own poetry. Indeed, his description also recalls Christ's re-enactment of the Genesis moment at the end of the Gospel of John, in which He "breathed" on his disciples so that they might receive the Holy Spirit before his ascension (Revelation 20: 22). As He gives them the Holy Spirit, Jesus commissions them to continue his work on earth, saying "as my Father sent me, so I send you" (20:21). In the same way, this stanza can be read as a commissioning of Spenser to continue Sidney's work on earth. Though the "thereto" suggests that Spenser hopes for complete inspiration after his own death, the temporal ambiguities of the tense shifts between clauses indicates those hopes are for earth as well. The breath with which Sidney inspires Spenser is the "heavenly" air which Sidney "there now breathe perfect and entire," infused with the presence of heaven. But that does not mean that Spenser also breathes it "perfect and entire." The conjunctive "and" that begins the clause "and into me that sacred breathe inspire" on the one hand continues the thought of "thereto do my humble spirits raise," meaning that once Spenser dies, Sidney will raise his spirits *and* inspire him with the heavenly breath they will then both share. On the other hand, the "and" also starts a different couplet, whose "inspire" rhymes with the succeeding verse's "entire," rather than with the preceding verse's "raise," suggesting that it is a wholly new thought that is unrelated to the previous clause. In this sense, "and into me that sacred breathe inspire" suggests that Spenser currently does not breathe the same air which Sidney now breathes "perfect and entire," but rather that Sidney's inspiring breath allows him, as Christ's breathing upon the disciples did, to continue the work of heaven on earth after his ascension and before his Second Coming. By Sidney's inspiration, Spenser as Sidney's disciple can deploy the work of heaven itself on earth in Sidney's absence.

In doing so, Spenser poses himself and his work as not only possible through the inspiration of Sidney's example, but a continuation of Sidney's eternizing work.

This, then, is why Spenser can "eternize" through his own poetry – because his poetic powers give eternal life to those who have died, and continue Sidney's work. This positioning of himself as the implementer of Sidney's work on earth allows Spenser to justify himself to the Countess of Pembroke. By channeling Sidney, Spenser brings future redemption to "eternize" Sidney's very family, through Sidney's very power. In the voice of Verlame's complaint, Spenser not only promises this life eternal to the Sidneys, but enacts a performance of how poetry accomplishes it upon the very page of his poem. Speaking again of Leicester, he says

He whilst he lived, happie was through thee,
And being dead is happie now much more;
Living, that lincked chaunst with thee to bee,
And dead, because him dead thou dost adore
As living, and thy lost dear love deplore.
So whilst that thou, faire flower of chastite,
Dos live, by thee thy Lord shall never die.

Thy Lord shall never die, the whiles this verse
Shall live, and surely it shall live for ever;
For ever it shall live, and shall rehearse
His worthie praise, and vertues dying never,
Though death his soul doo from his bodie sever.
And thou thy selfe herein shalt also live,
Such grace the heavens doo to my verses give. (ll. 246-261)

Leicester lives after death, "though death his soul doo from his bodie sever," because of the eternal verse of Spenser. These verses have eternal power because of the "grace" of heaven: since "heaven" is where Sidney lives, and is that which Spenser channels, they live by the grace of Sidney himself. That grace influences the structure of the verses to enact the eternizing power of Spenser's poetry: the promise that Leicester will "live" is repeated three times, an emphatic repetition that recalls the three days Christ spent in death before his Resurrection. The first clause

promising eternal life, “this verse / Shall live” bridges the chiasmus between the two verses in the couplet, as his verse bridges the gap between life and death. In a secondary chiasmus between two couplets, the concept again bridges the verse break, with an antimetabole that flips the phrase “it shall live forever / For ever it shall live.” The double-flip in the clauses of “forever life” here signify the reversal of death itself. It is as if the very syntax of his argument enacts the ability to reverse death and bridge its consequences to grant eternal life to his subjects. This allows him to syntactically mimic the resurrection process in his own poetry, lifting Leicester to eternal life by figuratively depicting his poetic transformation from life to death through the power of Sidney emanating from Spenser’s poetic work. The syntactical imitation of Spenser’s poetic power has the effect of justifying his poetic venture to the countess of Pembroke, as he demonstrates his ability to “eternize” her family as Sidney’s apostle. Thus does Spenser use the trope of Sidney-as-Christ in the poetic City of God to show that through the ruination of time, the existence of Sidney’s family will live forever.

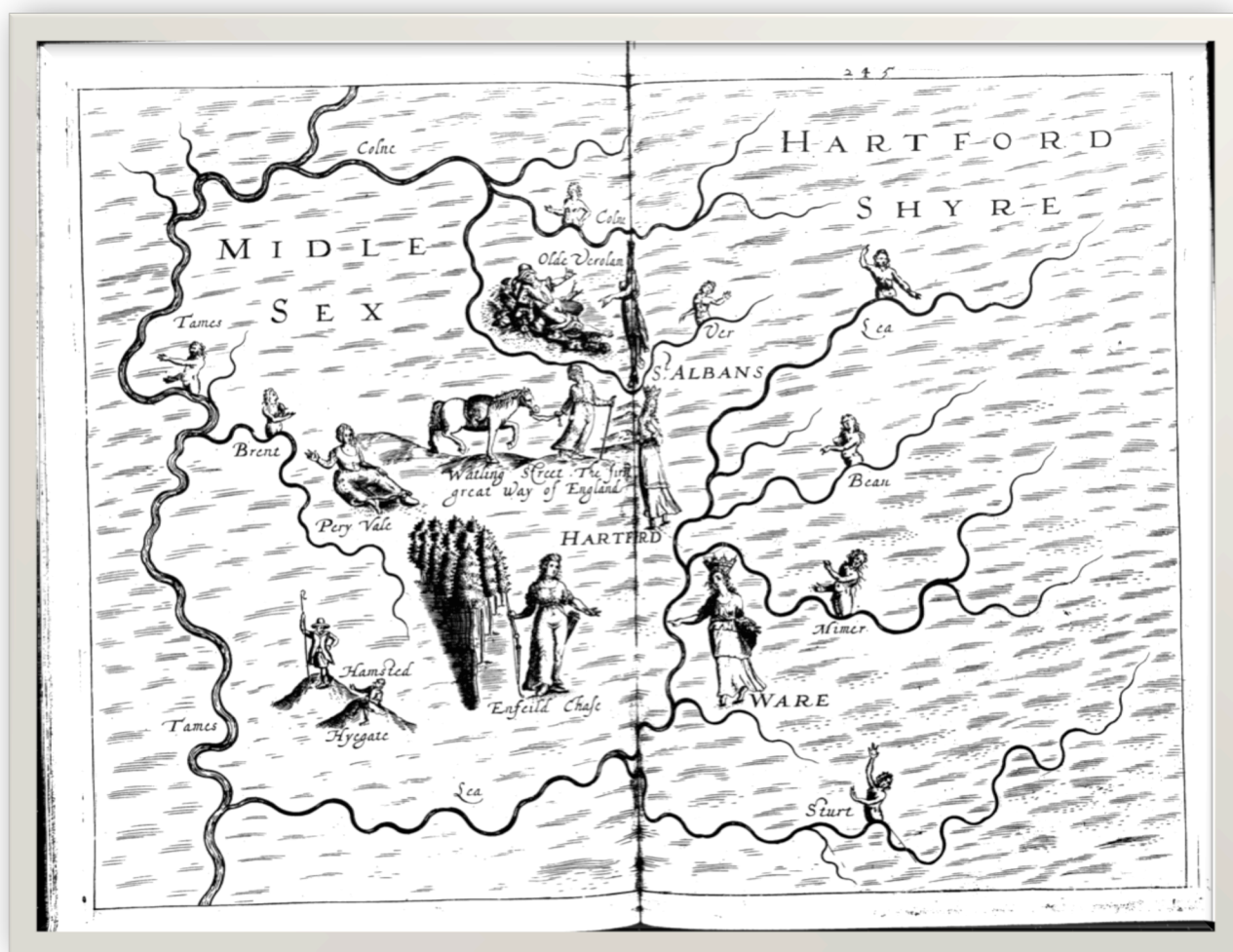


Figure A: Map of Hertfordshire in Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*,
(London: Printed for Iohn Marriott, Iohn Grismand, and Thomas Dewe, 1622).

CHAPTER 3

The Church of Margaret Clifford: or, the “Cookeham” that Lanyer Built

1. Introduction

We have come to see “The Description of Cookeham,” the poem at the end of Aemilia Lanyer’s 1611 *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, as the first country house poem in English, predating Jonson’s 1616 “To Penshurst” by only five short years.¹ Yet “Cookeham” as a poetic landscape lacks many of the buildings and people that populate later country house poems. The house that looms large in Ben Jonson’s “Penshurst,” Thomas Carew’s “To Saxeham,” and Andrew Marvell’s “Upon Appleton House” is, barring two brief mentions at the beginning and end of the poem, absent from its grounds. Later country house poems are frenetic with occupants and activity – with Marvell’s “frontispiece of poor” and “furniture of friends,” and Jonson’s and Carew’s country house populace coming in and out of the halls laden with gifts to be given and received.² But Lanyer’s “Cookeham” is, except for the presence of Margaret Clifford, countess of Cumberland, her daughter Anne Clifford, and Lanyer herself, practically deserted; the absence of the estranged Clifford patriarch, the Earl of Cumberland George Clifford, is particularly noticeable. Whereas the gardens and lands about the later country houses yield an abundance of vegetation, the second half of “Cookeham” chronicles the slow death of the land without its mistress. And, most significantly, “Penshurst,” “Saxeham,” and “Appleton House” all feature feasting as the central act of hospitality – be it “Penshurst’s” “liberal board” where Jonson not

¹. Introduction, *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, ed. Suzanne Woods. New York: Oxford University Press (1993), xxxix. All references to Lanyer’s poetry are from this edition. This modern edition is based on the first edition, the *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (London: Valentine Simmes for Richard Bonian, 1611).

². “Upon Appleton House,” *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Nigel Smith. New York: Longman Press (2007), 21-0242. ll. 68; “To Penshurst” and “To Saxeham,” *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets*, ed. Hugh Maclean. New York: Norton Press (1974), 21 and 164.

only sits, but feels welcomed; “Saxeham's” table where the prayers of the poor who eat from it “have made thy table blest / with plenty, far above the rest” (ll.13-14); or even “Appleton House,” where the mowers are fed as “rails rain for quails, for manna dew” (l. 408). Nowhere in “Cookeham” is food even mentioned, nor are there any to partake of it even should it appear.³ To include this elegiac description of a grounds without a dominating house or family within the genre of the country house poem uncovers only half the story of this compromised poetic space.

Lanyer's own declarations of intent suggest that “Cookeham” has far more interest in adding to the glory of Lanyer's desired patron, Margaret Clifford. The volume is divided into three parts: a series of letters to potential female patrons and readers; the recounting of the Passion narrative in “Salve Deus”⁴; and the ode to Clifford's hospitality in “The Description of Cookeham.” Though the “Salve Deus” recounts the Passion of Christ, the subject of this Passion narrative is Clifford herself,⁵ as inspiration, addressee, and inheritor of its Scriptural message. Lanyer herself makes this clear when she declares at the beginning of the “Salve Deus” that “to *thee* great Countesse now I will applie / My Pen, to write thy never dying fame; / That when to Heav'n thy blessed Soule shall flie, / These lines on earth record thy reverend name” (ll. 9-12). Though Margaret (allegedly) asked for an encomium to the house in which she had lived after her estrangement, Lanyer indicates that she wrote the *Salve Deus* instead, as she begs for “[P]ardon (Madame) though I *do not* write / These praisefull lines of that delightful place, / As you commaunded me in that faire night.” (ll. 17-19). By her own admission, the “Description of

³. See Lewalski, “Imagining Female Community: Aemilia Lanyer's Poems,” in *Writing Women in Jacobean England*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 213-41, 237.

⁴. I refer to the volume as a whole as the *Salve Deus*, while the Passion narrative within that volume of the same name is identified as the “Salve Deus.”

⁵. Throughout this chapter, I refer to the Dowager Lady Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland by her Christian name rather than her title or surname, because I want to evoke the loss of her social identity as lady of the estate following her and her daughter's separation.

Cookeham” is part of Lanyer’s message to Margaret in the poem, and intentionally avoids a praise of her residence. Nevertheless, house-like architecture sits at the center of the poem, as the “canopy” of trees upon Cookeham’s grounds forms an “abode” for its characters where the action takes place.⁶ What function, then, does architecture play in Lanyer’s “Description of Cookeham”?

In this chapter, I further the inquiry of this dissertation by reading Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* for images of religious ruins – albeit in this instance defined as the social ruin that follows Margaret’s loss of “Cookeham,” which Lanyer codes as a religious site. Like the ruins discussed in Foxe and Spenser, here “Cookeham” acts as a site of poetic redemption that preserves its poetic subject through the creation of a textual church community. The volume takes the famous injustices visited upon Margaret Clifford after her separation from her philandering husband as an occasion of loss upon which Lanyer might argue for her poetry’s reparative capacity. “Cookeham” documents the estate where Lanyer enjoyed the patronage of Lady Margaret Clifford, though the land belonged to the crown – and was, moreover, at Clifford’s disposal only through her brother, William Russell, who had leased it from the crown.⁷ There, Clifford re-assembled her retinue after her estrangement from her husband, George, both before and after his death and disinheritance of his daughter, Anne, from the lands that she felt were rightfully hers. Lanyer thus situates her praise of her patron in a space that signifies the events that had fragmented that patron’s social standing and identity – the loss of her position as mistress of her family’s lands and house.

⁶. “Cookeham,” ll. 25, 62.

⁷. Woods, xxv; Lewalski, “Female Community,” 212-41. See also Patrick Cook, “Aemilia Lanyer’s ‘Description of Cooke-ham’ as Devotional Lyric,” in *Discovering and Recovering the 17th c religious lyric*, ed. Eugene R. Cunnar and Jeffrey Johnson. (Pittsburgh : Duquesne University Press, 2001), 104-118; Lewalski, “The Lady of the Country House,” *Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 25 (1989), 261-275.

In the *Salve Deus* Lanyer creates, in compensatory fashion, a poetic space where Margaret's character and circumstances can be redeemed, both for herself, and for the readers of her tale. Lanyer exploits the relationship between the aristocratic discourse of hospitality, and the church discourse of charity, to encourage Margaret to identify with the character of the Church in the Passion narrative. Only then, Lanyer suggests, can Margaret redeem her social position. In light of that loss, "Cookeham" is not a discrete poem appended to the end of the volume, but central to its purpose, as the absent house in "Cookeham" creates a church-like space for that character's performance. Lanyer then expands the thematic imagery of house and church on Cookeham's grounds into an argument for her own poetic purpose in the dedicatory epistles. There, she positions herself as the pastoral head of Margaret's "church" identity, whose tending of the "congregation" of her readers fulfills Margaret's role and perpetuates Margaret's character into the future.

Lanyer draws her ecclesiastical poetic argument from the same tradition in which Foxe posited the religious community-creating capacity of "church texts."⁸ Her skill in crafting Biblical poetics in early modern English poetry is rivaled by Spenser, Donne, and Milton alone.⁹ Lanyer's literary ancestor was the greatest female Protestant poet of the early Tudor period, the Genevan exile Anne Vaughan Locke; Lanyer not only received her Protestant humanist education at the knee of Locke's close friend Susan Bertie, but she also relied upon that biographical connection to pose herself as the new Locke, providing spiritual sustenance to a new generation of readers.¹⁰ And as Marie Loughlin has demonstrated, not only Lanyer's

⁸. See the reading of the *Actes and Monuments* (1570) in Chapter 1, and the examination of how Herbert defines "church-texts" in Chapter 4.

⁹. Kari McBride and John Ulreich, "Answerable Styles: Biblical Poetics and Biblical Politics in Lanyer and Milton," *Journal of Germanic Philology*, 100:3 (2001), 33-54.

deployment of Biblical typology, but also her investment in the structure of Christian redemptive testimonial, indicates the influence of Foxe and other early Calvinists upon her poetics.¹¹ Her use of church images to form church community around the text, the trope which Foxe himself relied upon in the *Actes and Monuments*, seems then only to be expected. Invested as she was in the traditions established by early Tudor Protestantism, it is perhaps no surprise that she would conceive of her textual work as a church structure as they did.

My argument about Cookeham's role in Lanyer's poetic defense builds on recent scholarly work recovering Lanyer as a poet deeply invested in the connection between poetry and church, and in the creation of a Biblical poetics.¹² Theresa DiPasquale has eloquently argued that the feminine-gendered images of the Church as Bride of Christ in the text characterize all female members of the text's community as the Church body, because "Lanyer believes that each virtuous woman is Ecclesia incarnate, and that the community of virtuous women across

¹⁰. Suzanne Woods, "Anne Locke and Aemilia Lanyer: A Tradition of Protestant Women Speaking," in *The New Seventeenth Century: Essays in Honor of Barbara Keifer Lewalski*, ed. Amy Boesky and Mary Crane. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 171-84.

¹¹. "'Fast Ti'd Unto Them in a Golden Chain': Typology, Apocalypse, Loughlin, and Woman's Genealogy in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," in *Renaissance Quarterly* 53:1 (2000), 133-179. 139.

¹². Thanks to the work of Achsah Guibbory, Michael Schoenfeldt, and Kari McBride in recovering Lanyer from purely political readings. See Achsah Guibbory, "The Gospel According to Aemilia: Women and the Sacred in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," *Sacred and Profane: Secular and Devotional Interplay in Early Modern British Literature*. Ed. Helen Wilcox, Richard Todd, and Alasdair MacDonald. (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit UP, 1996). 105-26. 107, 361; McBride, "Biblical Poetics," 334; Michael Schoenfeldt, "The Gender of Religious Devotion: Amelia Lanyer and John Donne," in *Religion and Culture in the English Renaissance*, ed. Debora Shuger and Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 209-33. See also Cook, "Devotional Lyric"; Theresa DiPasquale, *Refiguring the Sacred Feminine: The Poems of John Donne, Aemilia Lanyer, and John Milton*. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 2008); Richard Duerden, "Crossings: Class, Gender, Chiasmus, and the Cross in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," *Literature and Belief* 19:1&2 (1999), 131; Constance Furey, "The Self Undone: Individualism and Relationality in John Donne and Aemilia Lanyer," *Harvard Theological Review* 99:4 (2006) 469-86; Catherine Keohane, "That Blindest Weakness Be Not Over-Bold": Aemilia Lanyer's Radical Unfolding of the Passion," *ELH* 64:2 (1997), 359-389; Lynette McGrath, "Metaphoric Subversions: Feasts and Mirrors in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," *Lit* 3:2 (1991), 101-113; Esther Richey, "Subverting Paul: The True Church and the Querelle des Femmes in Aemilia Lanyer" in *The Politics of Revelation in the English Renaissance*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 60-83; Micheline White, "A Woman with St. Peter's Keys?: Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and the Priestly Gifts of Women," in *Criticism* 45.3 (2003) 323-341.

history *is* the church, the body of Christ at work in the world.”¹³ Constance Furey has also demonstrated that the communal facets of the text arise out of Christian understandings of community, and that “Lanyer’s theological poetics offers a distinctive example of how someone shaped by religion, and by Christianity in particular, weaves together a relational world” as she “seeks to create encounters between reader, writer, and Christ” in the narrative.¹⁴ For these scholars, the community-building aspect of Lanyer’s work is key, and the poetics serve as a means to the end of surrounding herself with “good women” and potential patrons.

However, unlike scholars who focus on religious community as the end of Lanyer’s work, I am primarily interested in exploring how these thematic elements shape the defense Lanyer makes of her poetry as a work of reparation, and of herself as a reparative poet. This argument also assumes a unity between the three parts of the *Salve Deus*, and requires a new reading of the volume as an integrated whole in which each segment is dependent on the other two for its meaning. For if we read “Cookeham” not as a separate country house poem, but rather in tandem with the rest of the volume, much of the religious imagery in the dedications and the Passion narrative is seen to mirror that found in “Cookeham,” indicating that the three ostensibly separate poetic parts all serve as part of one goal. “Cookeham” is the cornerstone of the volume, laying the foundation for her defense in the epistles. Together, the three parts build toward a demonstration of the goal and means of Lanyer’s redemption of her beloved Margaret, in whose ruin she seeks salvation.

¹³. “Sacred Feminine,” 138, 106.

¹⁴. “Self Undone,” 472-23. See also Sharon Seelig, “To All Virtuous Ladies Generall: Aemilia Lanyer’s Community of Strong Women,” in *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*, ed. Claude Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth. (Columbia; University of Missouri Press, 2000), 44-58. p 44-5.

2. Margaret Clifford as the Bride of Christ: The “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum”

The ways in which Lanyer attempts to redeem Margaret’s circumstances in “Cookeham” are dependent on her framing of Margaret’s identity in the Passion narrative. In fact, the Passion narrative in the “Salve Deus” is primarily about Margaret herself, to whom Lanyer addresses the exposition of the story directly through marginal addresses and in-text exhortations that interpret her circumstances in the framework of the narrative. The parallels she draws between Margaret and the Church are drawn specifically in response to the circumstances surrounding Margaret’s marital separation, promising a means of consolation and redemption amidst her troubles. Many scholars have noted that Lanyer draws multiple parallels between Margaret and the Church, the Bride of Christ.¹⁵ But a closer look at both what those parallels suggest about Margaret’s identity, and why, is important for understanding the relation between the Passion narrative and “Cookeham.” Specifically, her identification with the character defines Margaret as a figure of redemption, because it places her in the position of providing for others. Lanyer’s characterization of Margaret in these terms of communal provision establishes the context necessary for that redemption, as it draws on the historical evolution of her aristocratic social role’s most vital expression, hospitality, from its ecclesiastical roots in the performance of charity. To that end, Lanyer reifies her depiction of Margaret’s charity into an analogous description of Margaret as an actual, physical church building – a description that she will then “build” upon, both literally and metaphorically, in the “Description of Cookeham.”

Lanyer urges Margaret to identify with the Bride of Christ, so that she might take on that figure’s redemptive potential in compensation for her marital separation and subsequent loss of lands. The Bride is noted for her relationship to Christ after his resurrection, when He “is rize from Death t’Eternall life / And now those pretious oyntments he desires / Are brought unto him

¹⁵. DiPasquale, “Sacred Feminine,” 141; Guibbory, “The Gospel,” 122; Keohane, “The Blindest Weakness,” 361.

by his faithfull Wife / The holy Church” (ll. 1289-93). Evoking the imagery of the Church in Revelation 22, Lanyer defines the character of the Church in this passage as the wife and consort of the resurrected Christ. This particular image for the Church evokes the institution’s role in providing sustenance to others as the conduit of Christ’s grace. The Holy Church in this passage tends to Christ’s post-Resurrection body with ointments in representation of the Church’s capacity to tend to those who make up Christ’s Body after his resurrection – the people of God, the congregants within the Church, who are sustained and provided for by each other in imitation of their Savior.

Earlier in the poem, Lanyer encourages Margaret to identify with this allegorical figure throughout the poem. The passion narrative in “Salve Deus” is preceded by an exhortation, announced in the margin as an address “to the Lady of Cumberland,” to serve God,

Still reckoning him, the Husband of thy Soule,
Which is most pretious in his glorious Sight:
Because the Worlds delights shee doth denie
For him, who for her sake vouchsaf’d to die.

And dying made her Dowager of all;
Nay more, Co-heire of that eternall blisse
That Angels lost, and we by *Adam’s* fall;
Meere Cast-awaies, rais’d by *Judas’* kisse,
Christ’s bloody sweat, the Vineger, and Gall,
The Spear, Sponge, Nailes, his buffeting with Fists,
His bitter Passion, Agony, and Death,
Did gaine us Heaven when He did loose his breath. (ll. 253-264)

Margaret’s similarities to the Bride of Christ allow the fictional circumstances of the Church figure to offer redemptive hope to Margaret’s real-life situation. In Lanyer’s directive to see Christ as the “Husband of [her] Soule,” we see that if Margaret follows this advice, she can identify with the Bride of Christ, and occupy a key position in the redemptive story. In describing Christ as the “husband” of Margaret’s soul, Lanyer suggests that her social status as a

dowager might also be rectified. As the widow of George Clifford (who died in 1605), and without actual lands, she has only the empty title of dowager countess. But by receiving a new, spiritual husband, she not only redeems her marriage, she also regains her inheritance. She is exhorted to deny the “Worlds delights” in social status, which makes her “Dowager of all” in the sense of gaining spiritual blessings through her suffering on earth. Yet the language for this sustenance is posed in terms of inheritance and title. As Margaret denies worldly bliss in favor of grace from God, she becomes a “Co-heire” with God – an inheritor of estate – who, despite her disinheritance, inherits *eternal*, rather than earthly, bliss. She is thus exhorted to see her dispossession and the loss of her daughter's inheritance and title as a means of gaining them back through spiritual identity.

Lanyer's description of Margaret as the Church compensates for her circumstances in this fashion because it positions Margaret at the center of the overlap between her social role's most significant expression – aristocratic hospitality – and that tradition's roots in charity as the expression of Christian communal sustenance. The performance of hospitality was the particular duty of aristocratic households in early modern England, and an expression of the family's social standing as providers.¹⁶ Hospitality, following ancient Greco-Roman conventions, was the process by which the stranger became part of the family; in fact, the Greek root for stranger or enemy, “*xenos*,” also paradoxically expresses the state of being a “guest friend.”¹⁷ Hospitality consisted of welcoming strangers into the home and creating relationship between host and guest through food, drink, and lodging, often signified by feasting which took on an elaborate

¹⁶. Kari McBride, *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England: A Cultural Study of Landscape and Legitimacy*. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), 9, 3. Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 23.

¹⁷. For an overview of Greek hospitality, see “The Conventions of the Homeric Hospitality Scene” in Steve Reece, *The Stranger's Welcome: Oral Theory and the Aesthetics of the Homeric Hospitality Scene*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 5-46.

ceremonial performance.¹⁸ Through this sharing of provisions, hospitality brings strangers into relationship with the hosts, and makes them part of the household.

As Felicity Heal has shown, the Greek sense of stranger-centric hospitality is joined in early modern England with Christian poverty-centric hospitality, and the Protestant notion that the poor are Christ incarnate and should be included in the Christian family.¹⁹ Hospitality was seen as a form of charity, a practice that furthered the redemptive, spiritual work of the Church by creating relationship and communion between those otherwise strangers to each other. While instructing householders on the “Christian care of their estates and goods,” for example, Edmund Topsell argues in his 1610 sermon on “The Householder, or Perfect Man” that “surely to be hospitable is a part of charity, and one of the greatest, whereof Scripture sayeth, Let Brotherly Love continue, and be not forgetful to lodge strangers, for thereby some have entertained Angels in the likeness of Menwe cannot lose by courtesy and humanity to strangers, for we are all strangers in this world.”²⁰ Hospitality’s greatest purpose is the fostering of “Brotherly Love” that joins guest and host in Christ. When Topsell argues that “we are all strangers in this world,” he reminds his readers that, because of their salvation, Christians are now “strangers” to the temporal world. But in calling his readers “strangers,” he also places them in the role of guests within the family of God, reminding them that their salvation is contingent on the grace of God having been bestowed upon them when they were mere “strangers” in need of God’s grace. Now that, as “strangers to this world,” Christians are the hosts in the family of God, it is incumbent

¹⁸. Heal, “Country House,” 4, 16

¹⁹. Ibid., 223. Note that hospitality for the poor is related but slightly different from later lavish displays of provision and entertainment to visiting royalty in aristocratic households (“Country House,” 141).

²⁰. Edward Topsell, *The house-holder: or, Perfect man. Preached in three sermons lately* (London: W. Jaggard, 1610), 168-169.

upon them to bestow similar hospitality on other “strangers” on earth, welcoming them, in turn, into the family of the people of God, the universal Church.

Though not a total substitutionary shift, the overlap between Greek household hospitality and Christian charity-as-hospitality resulted in the aristocratic household taking on many of the same charitable duties as the Church. According to Heal, church hospitality declined by the seventeenth century due to a combination of factors in the sixteenth century: specifically, the rise of the nation state mindset that favored country houses as outcroppings of the state, and the Protestant theology of “grace alone” that took away the impetus for charity.²¹ The most palpable manifestation of these shifts is that of the Dissolution of the Monasteries early in the English Reformation. Though previously the rule of charity in monasteries assured that guests of all social position would find relief from want and homelessness, the combination of internal corruption and external political pressure forced many monastic communities to close. Indeed, Henry VIII and others in the early Tudor era cited the monastic failure to “keep hospitality,” by ensuring that their alms boxes were well provisioned, as a reason for their dissolution.²²

These factors, along with a smattering of crop failures in the 1590s, and the rise of enclosures on public land, meant that though the parish church still provided alms for the poor, the locus of hospitality now also encompassed the country estate.²³ Elizabeth leaned heavily on the estate system to keep order in the realm, enforcing landowners’ responsibility to care for those within the jurisdiction of their lands.²⁴ These orders were frequently posed as directives to

²¹. Heal, “Country House,” 91, 263; McBride, “Country House Discourse,” 29.

²². Heal, “Country House,” 263.

²³. These circumstances gave rise to the infamous Elizabethan Poor Laws (1598). See Marsha McDonald, “The Elizabethan Poor Laws and the Stage in the Late 1590s,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, Vol. 7 (1995), 121-144, 122-3.

²⁴. Heal, “Country House,” 118, 21.

perform hospitality. In a proclamation against the hoarding of corn, “Enforcing orders against dearth, ordering hospitality kept in country and defenses maintained,” (1596) Elizabeth admonishes those “leaving the relief of their poor neighbors as well for food as for good rule, and with covetous minds to live in London... her majesty had thus determined for relief of her people to stay all good householders in their countries, there in charitable sort to keep hospitality.”²⁵ Ironically, the addition of country estates as centers of hospitality meant that the provision of hospitality even took place in many of the same, now reconstituted monastic buildings; as Kari McBride notes, because the old monastic buildings of England “were disassembled and reassembled to make the power [country] houses,” those country houses became a “re-membering of what is always already past in the service of the new subjectivities and cultural relationships.”²⁶

The conspicuous lack of a house to practice hospitality in the poem, then, reflects Margaret’s inability to take part in the performance of her social identity. In fact, the house itself is the key symbol of that role: hospitality in aristocratic households required, above all, a space for its performance, and for this reason its expression in action was thought to be impossible without the house and hall.²⁷ In his *Elements of Architecture* (1624), Henry Wotton says of the landowner that his country mansion is the “theater of his hospitality and the seat of self-fruition ...

²⁵. *Tudor royal proclamations*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-1969), 2: 169-172. See also “The Ordering Coast Dwellers to their Country Places,” (1587), *Ibid.*, 1:541.

²⁶. McBride, “Country House Discourse,” 12. See Chapter 1 for more on the conversion of monastic houses to country houses.

²⁷. As McBride puts it, “if hospitality represented the most important aspect of aristocratic performance – since it was by definition a public ‘act’ – it demanded a particular public space for its performance, the great hall of the country house. Without a great hall, neither could hospitality be practiced nor the noble estate – both idealized dwelling and social standing – be maintained” (“Country House,” 54).

to the possessors thereof, the epitome of the whole world.”²⁸ Since Margaret, separated from her husband and his lands, and with no access to the house that forms her aristocratic identity, had effectively lost her social role as matriarch, she could not express that role in acts of hospitality. For Lanyer to depict Margaret as the Church in light of this loss, then, indicates that Lanyer wants Margaret’s identity as the Church to act as a substitute or compensation for what she had lost by drawing on its status as the source of the aristocratic household’s very hospitable purpose.

Toward that purpose, by the end of the Passion narrative Lanyer describes the figure of Margaret in the poem with imagery reminiscent of actual, physical church buildings, in order to provide an imaginative substitute for the house Margaret lacks. Lanyer uses this characterization of Margaret to define her very body and self as a church space that can compensate for her missing estate. After the Resurrection scene, Lanyer addresses Margaret, saying

Therefore (good Madame) in your heart I leave.
His perfect picture, where it still shall stand,
 Deeply engraved in that holy shrine,
 Environed with Love and Thoughts divine.

There you may see him as a God in glory...

Oft times hath he made triall of your love,
And in your Faith hath tooke no small delight,
By Crosses and Afflictions he doth prove,
Yet still your heart remaineth firme and right;
Your love so strong, as nothing can remove,
Your thoughts beeing placed on him both day and night,
 Your constant soule doth lodge between her brests,
 This Sweet of sweets, in which all glory rests. (ll. 1325-1344)

²⁸. Henry Wotton, *The elements of architecture*. (London: Iohn Bill, 1624), 82.

As Catherine Keohane has argued, in this passage “Lanyer constitutes within the space of the Countess’ breast a new church,” locating her identity as the Church within her bodily self.²⁹ But that creation occurs in terms that evoke the physical building of the church more than its metaphorical sense, as Lanyer exploits the shared tenor of two vehicles for church metaphors – the image of the Bride and that of the Body – to designate her as a church *space*. The depiction of an engraving of holy virtue on Margaret’s heart, the seat of her soul and its devotion to God, physicalizes her soul, giving it a sense of matter, substance, and spatiality. A “holy shrine,” a space designated for devotion and prayer in temples, envelops Margaret’s heart. By implication, her body itself is the church building, with her breast in particular as the space of habitation. In that place her soul *lodges*, denoting the taking up of residence, in the “brest” of “*her*,” or the breast of the Church with whose fictional body she has been conflated. The space of her breast thus becomes a sturdy structure for habitation.

In that metaphorical space, Lanyer depicts Margaret performing acts of charity, which gives her a way of fictively performing the provision and relationship that she can no longer enact in real life. Lanyer weaves Margaret’s identity as the Bride of Christ who tends his body together with descriptions of her care for others. When placing Christ in her breast, Lanyer claims “[t]here you may see him as a God in glory / ... And all your prayers, and your almes-deeds / May bring to stop his cruell wounds that bleeds.” (ll. 1331, 1335). The image Lanyer conjures is of the tending of Christ’s body and the “cruel wounds” gotten during the Crucifixion. This portrayal rewrites the narrative of Scripture, in which Christ’s female disciples come to his tomb to tend his body, only to find it already resurrected, a reversal that places Margaret as Christ’s Bride in the tense intermediary stage before the Resurrection. This placement proclaims that Church’s purpose in the world is to usher in the Resurrection in the midst of the death and

²⁹. “The Blindest Weakness,” 361.

destruction plaguing human history.³⁰ To bring about the final resurrection, of course, the Church enacts redemption first by extending the grace of salvation, but also by tending to the most destitute. Margaret's "works of mercy" occur within the "*There*" of the heart-space; her deeds' capacity to "stop his cruell wounds that bleed" refers back to his initial "picture," as a "God in Glory" who is engraved within the shrine of her heart. The subject of her ministrations in this passage, then, is the image of Christ, to whom she has been married, in her heart.

But because, through a conflation of imagery in the Christian tradition, Christ's body is composed of the members of the Church as well, in tending him she can tend others through her meditation on him. When, two stanzas later, Lanyer praises Margaret's "works of mercy" which are the "keys Saint Peter did possess," the charitable actions that mark a true incarnation of the Church, she is describing not her actual works but the work of her *heart*, her imaginative church structure. Lanyer states that there "Sometime imprison'd, naked, poore, and bare / Full of diseases, impotent, and lame, / Blind, deafe, and dumbe, he comes unto his faire / To see if shee will remaine the same; / Nay sicke and wounded, now thou do'st prepare / To cherish him in thy dear Lovers name. / Yea thou bestow'st all paines, all cost, all care, / That may relieve him, and his health repaire" (ll. 1353-1360). Just as the discourse of hospitality demands, Margaret intends to care for others "in thy dear Lovers name," and for Christ's sake shows charity to those in need. In fact, the objects of her care may seem to be multiple, but given that her works happen only in her heart, the object is actually simply Christ in disguise. The description of charity here references the parable of Matthew 25 in which Christ exhorts his followers to care for the sick, imprisoned, naked, poor, and lame whose provision at the charitable hands are demanded because, "inasmuch as ye haue done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye haue done it

³⁰. Luke 24:1-8.

to me” (Matthew 25:40).³¹ Thus to care for others is to care for Christ. But here Lanyer reverses that theological tenet – while usually, ministering to others is a means of ministering to Christ, in this passage her meditation on Christ in the figurative space of her heart allows her to figuratively provide for others. In caring for him, then, when her actions relieve “*him*,” and repair “*his*” health, she can demonstrate charity to others, because his body is made up of them. The church space of her heart becomes a poetic space where she can enact charity – and, through it, hospitality – despite lacking the actual space in real life.

Lanyer’s description of Margaret as the Church establishes a foundation upon which she will build an argument for her poetry’s reparative capabilities in “Cookeham.” The conflation of Margaret’s identity as the Bride of Christ with Margaret’s dispossession enables an extended space for Lanyer’s depiction of her in the poem to compensate for that which Margaret had lost and provides a means by which the related imagery of church architecture might enact redemption. The figurative church space that Lanyer creates in her characterization of Margaret’s heart will allow for further architectural imagery and metaphors in “Cookeham” to rebuild Margaret and, through Margaret, make a defense of Lanyer’s own ecclesiastical poetic role.

3. Cookeham

In the Passion narrative, Lanyer invites Margaret to identify with the Church in a way that might compensate for her fractured social identity by providing a figurative compensation for her lost role. In “Cookeham,” Lanyer uses that characterization to depict an attempt at the

³¹. Cited in *The Geneva Bible (1560): The Bible of the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Lloyd Berry. (Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Press, 2007). All Biblical references are to this edition.

poetic repair of Margaret's circumstances.³² Lanyer projects Margaret's church identity onto the fictionalized landscape of Cookeham, characterizing her as a spiritual church to establish her as a compensatory church building.

In "Cookeham," the space where the house should be is inhabited largely by Margaret's presence. Lanyer opens her poem with a double "Farewell (sweet *Cooke-ham*) where I first obtain'd / Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain'd" and "Farewell (sweet Place) where Virtue then did rest, / And all delights did harbor in her breast" (ll. 1-2, 7-8). The relative pronoun "where" denotes a place addressed as a space of action. But the parenthetical identification of "Sweet *Cooke-ham*" as the "place" to which she bids adieu seems to act as an acknowledgment that the physical, architectural space of the house is not fully present in its description. Rather, the description of the place could apply equally to a physical space or a state of being, since Lanyer praises the source from which "I first obtain'd / Grace from that Grace" and where "Virtue then did rest." The second line of the couplet moves the emphasis of action from the "sweet place" to the "breast," while the "and" suggests that "Virtue then did rest" in "her breast" along with "all delights" harboring there. Thus the end of the couplet reveals the parenthetical "sweet place" to be the breast itself.

Her "Grace" and "Virtue" also emanate from a very specific "breast" – namely, Margaret's, as Lanyer makes clear a few lines later when addressing "you (great Lady) Mistris of

³². It is true that "Cookeham" shares many of the same concerns and tropes of the country house poem – the centrality of the house and land to the poetic argument, the poet's relationship with the master or mistress of the estate, the relationship between the house and its surrounding natural environment. But the country house poem as a homogenous genre is, in the end, as much about Jonson as it is about the country house discourse, as Carew, Herrick and other "Sons of Ben" attempted to imitate Jonson in style and substance. Its proximity in publication date to Jonson has also led many to argue for shared influence between Lanyer and Jonson. Nevertheless, Lanyer's poem was, simply, published first, thereby closing off the possibility of her imitating Jonson in any substantive way. See Cook, 105; Heather Dubrow, "The Country House Poem: A Study of Generic Development," *Genre* 12 (1979), 153-79; Hibbard, G.R. "The Country House Poem in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 19:1 (1956), 159-174; Hugh Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths: The Country House Poem and the Fashioning of the Ideal Community*. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998); William McClung, *The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

that place / From whose desires did spring this worke of Grace” (ll. 11-12). “[T]hat Place,” in this stanza, refers to the estate of Cookeham itself, upon which the action is about to take place. The location of “grace” and “virtue” in the breast of Margaret, who acts as its “mistress,” harkens back to Lanyer’s description of Margaret’s “breast” as the habitation of the Bride of Christ in the Passion. Margaret’s ecclesiastical body has made its way from the Passion narrative to the plane of action on the landscape of the fictional “Cookeham.” In this landscape, Margaret is also referred to within parentheses, aligning her presence with that of the missing house and conflating the two as the space of action. Margaret the church space essentially replaces the house, and in that guise Margaret can perform the Church’s duties more freely.

Lanyer architecturalizes Margaret so that she functions spatially in the poem much the way the house might be expected to function. The first of the poem’s two references to the actual house characterizes it as receptive to the person of Margaret: “Oh how (me thought) against you thither came, / Each part did seeme some new delight to frame! / The House receiv’d all ornaments to grace it, / And would indure no foulness to deface it. / The Walkes put on their summer Liveries / And all things else did hold like similies” (ll. 17-21). Lanyer associates Margaret with the space where the house should be by means of “similies” that conflate the two. These establish the house as a description of her, infused by her, as the space becomes personified. The “parts” of the house move “thither ... against,” or ahead of, Margaret’s arrival. But the ambiguous placement of “against” also syntactically link the phrase with the previous sentence that references the “earthly pleasures” that Margaret has had to give up. This would suggest that it is *Margaret*, the “you” to whom Lanyer speaks, who readies herself in anticipation of those pleasures. The conflation of Margaret with the house is further implied by Lanyer’s personification of it, since the house and walks receive the clothing of “ornaments” and liveries,”

and its description as resisting “defacement” completes the description of it as a person like Margaret. The house described here, in other words, is an architectural description of Margaret herself, allowing her physical manifestation in the landscape of the poem as a house-space.

Lanyer then reifies the landscape into architectural structures that promote church ceremony and activity, surrounding Lanyer with the trappings of her identity as the Bride of Christ. As Margaret walks through the grounds of Cookeham, the landscape of trees builds itself around her presence, as “with leaves, with fruits, with flowers clad, / Embrac'd each other seeming to be glad / Turning themselves to beauteous Canopies” (ll. 23-25). The trees' mutual “embrace” creates a single arboreal structure, expressing a sense of community and togetherness, which creates a physical ceiling in the canopy to house Margaret. The mutual lifting up of the branches together evokes a spiritual sense of building up in faith through community, evoking the Christian sense of church as a place of edification for the congregation. This architecture forms part of a landscape whose center is the oak tree, which Lanyer describes in distinctly Temple-like terms:

The Oake that did in height his fellowes passe
As much as lofty trees, low growing grasse;
Much like a comely Cedar streight and tall,
Whose beauteous stature farre exceeded all;
How often did you visit this faire tree,
Which seeming joyfull in receiving thee,
Would like a Palme tree spread his armes abroad,
Desirous that you there should make abode. (ll. 55-62)

Lanyer compares the oak to first a cedar and then a palm – neither of which is native to England, but which have associations with the place of the Temple in Scripture. Specifically, 1 Kings 6:18 documents how the Temple of Solomon – from which the Church originated, in the Protestant tradition – was built in Jerusalem entirely from cedar, “kerved with knoppes and graven with flowres; all was cedre, so that no stone was seen.” The original Temple's floral and vegetable

decorations created a space in which the architecture naturalizes the community by surrounding it with motifs of nature. Here, Lanyer's oak creates a reverse space, using nature to compensate for the architectural lack, and creating a Temple-like space that turns the oak tree into a holy space.

The palm, moreover, is famously associated with the beginning of the Passion narrative in which Lanyer places Margaret throughout the rest of the poem – Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on an ass, during which the people of Jerusalem laid down palm branches to celebrate him.³³ Its significance to the story is celebrated each year during Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, as a reminder of the paradoxical triumph over death that comes on Easter Sunday. The plant's Latin name – “*Phoenix dactylifera*”³⁴ – evokes images of resurrection, as when Lanyer describes Margaret a few lines earlier as a “Phoenix,” at home in the natural setting as “each Arbor, Banke, each Seate, each stately Tree / Thought themselves honor'd in supporting thee” (ll. 44-46). When Lanyer describes the oak tree as a palm that is “joyful in receiving thee,” and “desirous that you there should make abode,” she invokes this triumphal entry into Jerusalem. While before Margaret was only the Bride of Christ, Lanyer exploits the Christian association between the Church as the Bride and as the Body of Christ to position Margaret as a Christ-figure entering the holy space of the church – the cedar-paneled Temple of the oak tree. Margaret, the church-presence, inhabits the landscape's physical manifestation of the church building, bringing resurrective promise and potential.

Lanyer's designation of the oak tree as the physical church space of Margaret's activity sanctifies Margaret's estate, making it a holy place. Its transformation from nature to structure

³³. Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44, and John 12:12-19.

³⁴. See “Palm,” (3b), *OED*. Note that it is not etymologically connected to Phoenix the mythical Greek bird, but it certainly evokes images of it. A full history and discussion of the Palm's virtues can be found in a slightly later text: William Coles, *Adam in Eden, or Nature's paradise the history of plants* (London: J. Streater, 1657), 234.

also indicates that this poem is less a “description” of Cookeham than it is a response to the circumstances that made Margaret’s presence at Cookeham necessary. Though she has been cast out of her home, “Cookeham” offers a fictional space that replaces what she has lost. The oak tree stands as a symbol of the English country house as a place where the aristocratic family puts down roots, and so stands for the place where Margaret might be rooted in its stead. And from this space, Lanyer offers solace to Margaret by depicting it as a place where the institutions that deprived her of her rightful estate might be challenged. For not even the Church of England would stand with Margaret or her daughter, Anne – Anne reports in her diary that, after years of pressing her suit to win back her lands in court with no success, the Archbishop of Canterbury himself exerted pressure on her to give up her claim.³⁵ To conflate it with the Temple-like cedar, then, is to re-designate it as an alternative space for religious practice that encourages further reparation of the situation facing Margaret. The subversive boldness of this poetic picture is not to be overlooked, for it suggests that Margaret’s and her daughter’s continued fight for what is rightfully theirs is a redemptive act condoned by the *true* Church, even if that means they act in defiance of the church institution which had ignored their predicament.

But the subversiveness of the oak-church as an alternative religious site for religion is nothing compared to the absolute boldness of what Lanyer depicts there – the holy work of these dispossessed women to make their own, woman-headed church out of the ruins of their estate. Lanyer creates this space around Margaret so that she might aesthetically rehearse her responsibilities as the church in the poem as a substitute for what she cannot do in real life. Of the oak tree's presence Lanyer says “What was there then but gave you all content, / While you

³⁵. “Upon the 17th, being Saturday, my Lord Archbishop of Canterbury ... took me aside and talked with me privately one hour and a half and persuaded me both by divine and human means to set my hand to these agreements but my answer to his Lordship was that I would do nothing till my Lady [Margaret] and I had conferred together.” *The Diary of Anne Clifford*, ed. Katherine Acheson. (New York: Broadview, 2007), 71.

the time in meditation spent, / Of their Creators powre, which there you saw / In all his Creatures held a perfit Law; / And in their beauties did you plain descrie / His beauty, wisdom, grace, love, majestie” (ll. 76-79). Here the space around the oak in the estate's wooded areas naturalizes the power and attributes of God in his creation, allowing his presence to enter into the landscape through the tree-architecture. The landscape becomes a space where her interactions with nature also double as interactions with Christ. Margaret can take part in all the ceremonies and lessons of the church simply by communing with the landscape in which she houses herself:

In these sweet woods how often did you walke,
 With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
 Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
 To meditate what you therein did see:
 With Moyses you did mount his holy Hill,
 To know his pleasure and performe his Will.
 With lovely David you did often sing,
 His holy Hymnes to heaven's Eternall King.
 And in sweet musicke did your soule delight,
 To sound his prayses, morning, noone and night.
 With blessed Joseph you did often feed
 Your pined brethren when they stood in need. (ll. 81-92)

Margaret's walking and talking with Christ and his apostles indicates the act of prayer, which arises out of what she “sees” and meditates upon from the “holy writ” she places in the tree. The image evoked is of placing a Bible upon a lectern, suggesting that the tree is a natural outcropping of the church architecture figuratively built by Lanyer's oak-church. Because Margaret's meditative sense of God's presence arises from the creation she sees, however, the holy Writ she reads in the tree is the beauty of God in nature that she earlier “describes.” The object of her meditation in the previous line, then, the thing which she “sees,” is not the holy Writ but the “tree” upon which she places it, and which completes the couplet. It is her relationship with the natural setting around her that constitutes an act of reading and interpretation. From this reading of naturalized Scripture, Lanyer can then participate as part of

the body of Christ, the Church – she can “know” God's pleasure as required in Moses' commandments, and “performe” his will in her actions, “praising” God in song through her reading of the Psalms.

Margaret's identification “with blessed Joseph” through her reading means that here, in the landscape, she can perform those acts that are most synonymous with church community but which her dispossession explicitly denies her: the “works of mercy” that had been ascribed to her in the Passion narrative, and which constitute the performance of hospitality. Lanyer identifies the receivers of Margaret's grace as “pined brethren,” a description of neediness that provides her with a community with which she can have a significant relationship. The positioning of the trees as “brethren” references the primary relationship between congregants in a church – those “brothers and sisters” in Christ who together make up his Body. Margaret then, at last has a congregation with whom she might practice hospitality, as she is required.

This moment of arboreal charity also enacts the key component of hospitality that is otherwise absent from Margaret's practice – the provision of feasting. Her naming of the “pined brethren” alludes to the story of Joseph in Genesis, who provides for his “pining” brothers as they starved in the midst of Egypt's famine. Joseph, the youngest of the sons of Israel and, in the allegorical tradition of Scripture reading, an early Christ-figure, rose to power in Egypt by means of his brothers' betrayal, and was positioned by God so that he could provide for the whole nation of Egypt and Israel during their time of famine.³⁶ Margaret is in a similar position by virtue of her dispossession – like Joseph, she provides for others by the grace of God not just in spite of her circumstances but *because* of them, and as an agent whose paradoxical capacity for provision arises out of hardship. Devoid of real community and unable to perform her duties, in

³⁶. Genesis 50:20, as Joseph himself said to his brothers: “When ye thought euil against me, God disposed it to good, that he might bring to pass, as it is this day, and save much people alive.”

her arboreal architecture Margaret can, at least symbolically, provide sustenance for the aesthetic work that surrounds her.

Though the poetic architecture that Lanyer builds around Margaret sustains her in her loss, the poem's eventual collapse mirrors the real-life expulsion of Margaret from her own lands and it acts as an admission on Lanyer's part that her poetry in itself will not rectify Margaret's social situation. The very occasion of the poem's creation, Margaret's and Anne's forced departure from Cookeham after losing the lease of the house, predicates the poem's failure to enact meaningful change through its own aesthetic representation of what should be. Cookeham's literary pantomime of charitable action, hitherto the recuperated product of Margaret's misfortunes, cannot sustain itself without her. Lanyer describes how the trees "Forsooke both flowres and fruit, when once they knew / Of your depart, their very leaves did wither" and "Their frozen tops like Ages hoarie haires, / Showes their disasters, languishing in feares: / ... Their dying bodies halfe alive, halfe dead" (ll. 134-146). With Margaret's departure, the course of resurrection reverses itself and death again takes over, as the plants regress, "halfe alive, halfe dead," and lose the animation they received in Margaret's presence. As the landscape reverses to its inanimate self, its earlier personification seems to fight its death, as "each brier, each bramble, when you went away, / Caught fast your clothes, thinking to make you stay" (ll. 197-98). Eventually the conflation of Margaret with the estate dissolves completely. In a reversal of the lone building's earlier personification, at the end of the poem "The house cast off each garment that might grace it, / Putting on Dust and Cobwebs to deface it" (ll. 201-202). Those markers of animation – the garments and the integrity of its architectural "face" – are here "cast off" and "defaced," marking its separation from the essence of Margaret it had been filled by. Without Margaret, the estate is, both literally and figuratively, destroyed and collapsed.

Cookeham ends as an inactive marker of what is not or cannot be there, and is unable to create change in itself as the house should. And while Lanyer may create the analogy between Margaret and her lost estate to compensate for Margaret amidst her dispossession, by the end of the poem she demonstrates that her own poem cannot save the estate from ruin, even symbolically.

In consequence, after reaching its apex of celebration, the second half of the poem seems to undo all that the first half accomplished. Richard Duerden has charted how Lanyer creates perfect symmetry between the first and second halves of the poems, establishing a stanzaic chiasmus in which each line at the beginning of the poem is revisited, and the object established at first is then dismantled.³⁷ No sooner does Lanyer proffer poetic redemption than she immediately admits her own insufficiency to enact it. According to Duerden, in its slow poetic ruin, the second half of “Cookeham” nevertheless secures Margaret’s inevitable redemption in poetry, since the chiastic structure of “Cookeham” evokes the power of the cross to “reverse” injustices and oppression by the paradox of resurrection. The slow demise of the estate in the poem “envisages God’s crossing of the world, even as she herself crosses her text structurally with chiasmus, rhetorically with paradox, and ideologically with reversal.”³⁸ For Duerden, the formal use of chiasmus itself generates this paradoxical reversal in the poem by evoking an “awareness of grace” associated with the cross itself.³⁹

But I would suggest that the poem’s reversal, with Margaret’s exile and the estate’s gradual deterioration, establishes a power transfer from Margaret the church to Lanyer the poet that sustains Margaret’s legacy past the end of the poem. In fact, by its denouement, “Cookeham” becomes as much about Lanyer’s assertion of her own poetic power as it is a praise

³⁷. Duerden, “Crossings.”

³⁸. Ibid., 133-139.

³⁹. Ibid.

of her patron, and the two tasks are integral to each other. The demise of the estate is predicated by Lanyer's own cameo upon the grounds with Anne, with whose sports "my selfe did alwaies beare a part" (l. 121). Many scholars have attempted to situate Lanyer's appearance in the poem as a recounting of her actual time spent with Margaret and Anne on the real grounds of Cookeham.⁴⁰ I want to argue, however, that just as there is no real house in the poem, so also Lanyer is not referencing her visit to the real estate it represents. Rather, Lanyer presents her sudden appearance as a feature of the landscape, and part of the aesthetic structure's purpose in housing Margaret. Her appearance in the poem is less an expression of Lanyer being physically *in* the presence of Cookeham, and more an expression of her relationship *to* Clifford. At the beginning of the poem, she describes Margaret as the place "where I first obtain'd / Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain'd." (ll. 1-2). If Margaret is the "where" of the poem, the "Grace where perfit Grace remain'd" is Margaret, not the estate. Lanyer is not necessarily recreating an actual instance of being present in Margaret's retinue, but rather using the imagined setting of the poem to establish a relationship with Margaret that allows her to inhabit the poetic landscape as well.

Lanyer's expression of her relationship to Margaret is necessary to her poetic goal, as it facilitates Lanyer's ability to take part in the "church" of Margaret by being in community with her. The "grace" that remains in Margaret indicates her salvific nature as well as her aristocratic identity. It is *there*, in Margaret, that Lanyer herself gets further "Grace," defined both in its expected aristocratic meaning as the bestowal of patronage, hospitality, and the state of "Grace" given to those within the church. In doing so, she likens the patronage she received from Margaret to a state of conversion, or the act that signifies the reception of grace and subsequent

⁴⁰. Woods, Introduction, 25; See also Lewalski, "Rewriting Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Ann Clifford, and Aemilia Lanier," in *YES* 21 (1991), 87-106.

participation in the church. She thus brings the terms of her patronage within the purview of Margaret's imagined church, identifying herself as a member of the saved. Through her connection to Margaret, Lanyer places herself within a figural church-space that can further Margaret's church-mission.

This positioning of herself and her relationship with Margaret within the figurative church in the poem places Lanyer in a position of authority-by-transference, in which she takes on and then deploys Margaret's grace to others. Though she largely side-steps Clifford's directives as her patron, Lanyer describes the commissioning of the poem as an act that invests her role as a poet with the capacity to bring her readers into Clifford's church. The place where Lanyer gains Margaret's "Grace" is also the place "where the Muses gave their full consent, / I should have powre the virtuous to content; / Where princely Palace will'd me to indite / the sacred Storie of the Soules delight" (ll. 3-6). Margaret, again figured architecturally as the "princely Palace," the house-church of "Cookeham," "wills" Lanyer's "sacred Storie," the Passion narrative of the "Salve Deus," through her commissioning of the poem. But the recipients of this "indite[d]" narrative are the other readers, not Margaret. The number of the "virtuous" for whom Lanyer is given the power to "content" is not specified, but her introductory address "To all vertuous Ladies in generall" suggests it is plural, and is addressed to those women who will read the poem after its publication. She thus characterizes her poem as a continuation of Margaret's grace, from Margaret to her, and from her to her readers. Lanyer describes Margaret as the "Mistris of that Place, / From whose desires did spring this worke of Grace" (ll. 11-12). The volume as a "worke of Grace" takes the genitive as the object of Margaret's "Grace," the product of the favor shown to Lanyer. But this comes with an implied second genitive sense of a definition of its function, as a work that bestows that grace to others.

Through the commissioned text, Lanyer acts as an agent of transfer whose poetry brings its readers into the space of Margaret's church.

But the transference of grace between Margaret and Lanyer is possible only because of Margaret's loss of power, and Lanyer demonstrates that the persistent dysfunction of Margaret's aesthetic church on the landscape is necessary for her larger poetic goals. For the collapse of the architecture on the poem's landscape provides the catalytic moment of transference, as Margaret's unfortunate exile from "Cookeham" gives rise to Lanyer's poem. Lanyer represents this shift as an interaction between her and Margaret within the woodland "church." Before leaving, Lanyer depicts Margaret and her daughter Anne taking her to the oak tree, where "To this faire tree, taking me by the hand, / You did repeat the pleasures which had past, / Seeming to grieve they could no longer last. / And with a chaste, yet loving kisse tooke leave, / Of which sweet kisse I did it soon bereave; / Scorning a senceless creature should possesse / So rare a favour, so great happinesse" (ll. 162-167). This moment is the climactic middle of the decline of the estate, preceded by the slow, grieving deaths of the trees and blossoms, and proceeding the birds' forsaking of the estate and the house's deleterious separation from Margaret, as "all the rest with this most beauteous tree / Made their sad consort Sorrowes harmony" (ll. 177-78). It is the only moment when Margaret, Lanyer, and Anne interact during the progress of the estate's collapse. The oak tree formed the centerpiece of that collapsing landscape, as the central space where Margaret's church-like essence housed itself, and where she ministered to the "pined brethren" whose presence served as aestheticized reifications of a church community for whom she could no longer provide hospitality. In this moment, then, the tree is the point of meeting between Margaret and her estate, and the church-tree is animated by its interaction with Margaret. The act of kissing signifies a sharing of self with another, an imparting and sharing of

essences. As Margaret kisses the tree in mourning, it becomes a paradox, a “senceless creature” that, though inherently insensate, exhibits the capacity for agency to “possess” that kiss. In that kiss, it also becomes a habitation for her presence, her essence, and her purpose. Its sudden agency explains why the natural church of the poem had hitherto not been fully able truly to take part in Margaret’s display of hospitality – because only Margaret’s presence gave the “pined brethren” and their aesthetic community life, and they could ever be only reflections of her will and not true partners in communal relationship with her.

So when Lanyer “bereaves” the tree of its animating kiss, she takes Margaret’s essence for herself and becomes its receptacle in the oak’s place. She claims that upon stealing Margaret’s kiss from the tree, “No other kisse it could receive from me, / For fear to give it backe what it tooke of thee: / So I ingratefull Creature did deceive it, / Of that which you vouchsaft in love to leave it” (ll. 168-72). The “it” which Lanyer refuses to give back is Margaret’s church-like essence and purpose that Margaret “left” upon her exile but which could not be sustained by the collapsing landscape. She situates herself as an agent equal to the tree, with a similar capacity for holding Margaret’s power within herself. She refers to herself as a “creature,” associating herself with the tree as a “creature,” and indicating their similar positions within the narrative as recipients of Margaret’s kiss. As she takes that kiss from the tree and refuses to give it back, she leaves the landscape to collapse without either Margaret or Margaret’s purpose, moving the focus of the poem in its last half out of the architecture she built throughout the poem and onto her own role as its author, through which she now performs Margaret’s salvific purpose on her behalf.

The stolen kiss that moves Margaret’s church-essence from the architecture of the poem to Lanyer’s own person infuses Lanyer’s poetic venture with the purpose and authority that

Margaret has as the figure of the church, allowing Lanyer to establish herself as the new figure of the church. This is because the acquisition of Margaret's essence transforms her poetic undertaking from a static monument of eternal praise for her patron to a dynamic space where Lanyer can minister to others in her stead – a particularly bold undertaking, given Lanyer's significantly lower class and social standing.⁴¹ She closes the poem with “this last farewell to *Cooke-ham* here I give, / When I am dead thy name in this may live, / Wherein I have perform'd her noble hest, / Whose virtues lodge in my unworthy breast, / And ever shall, so long as life remaines, / Tying my heart to hers by those rich chaines” (ll. 205-210). Lanyer describes “Cookeham” as an incarnation of the *aere perennius* trope, in which her poetic elegy will preserve her patron's memory forever. The representation of Margaret as the house in “Cookeham” allows her “name in this” poem to live past their earthly deaths. The possessive “thy” takes as its referent “Cookeham,” but more specifically, Margaret as the main feature of Cookeham, to whom Lanyer addresses herself with the intimately familiar form of the personal pronoun “thy” to indicate her close personal relationship with Margaret. Just as the architecturalized landscape housed Margaret the character, so does the poem more broadly provide a space where Margaret the patron may “live” forever in her literary representation.

Rather than simply leaving the poem as an everlasting monument that represents Margaret forever, through that kiss Lanyer takes on Margaret's church-purposes, along with her power, and enacts those purposes for others in her role as a poet. By writing “Cookeham,” Lanyer's heart is “tied” to Margaret's, indicating the link they share with Lanyer's possession of her “essence.” The poem is a place “wherein I have perform'd her noble hest.” In one sense this claim is part of a standard praise of one's patron, and the “hest” that Lanyer performs is

⁴¹. Ann Baynes Coiro detects an anger at this disparity and the necessity of patronage all together. See “Writing in Service: Sexual Politics and Class Position in the Writings of Aemilia Lanyer and Ben Jonson.” *Criticism* 35:3 (1993), 357-376. 368.

Margaret's order to write a praise of Cookeham. But in another sense, the “hest” that Lanyer performs is Margaret's will, her purpose, and performance. In this reading, her hospitable will is carried out in the poem by Lanyer, allowing Lanyer to show others hospitality in her stead through the volume she has compiled.

To that end, Lanyer fashions herself and her poetry as a new church space, a habitation for Margaret's church identity. Margaret's essence, her “virtue,” is “lodged” now in *Lanyer's* breast, just as it had been in Margaret's own at the beginning. The talk of breasts where virtue “lodges” alludes to her earlier description of the Passion, where Christ himself is lodged within Margaret's breast. This description brings with it, then, those same ecclesiastical overtones. Just as Christ's lodging transformed Margaret into the church, so also here Margaret's lodging transforms Lanyer into the new church. In making her own breast the new lodging of Margaret's virtue, Lanyer indicates that she herself is a *new* church that houses the essence of Margaret's figural body. With her poetry lodging Margaret's character, and her own role and identity as the poet lodging Margaret's mission and purpose as the Church, Lanyer ends “Cookeham” by establishing it as the poetic space where her subject's collapsing fortunes give rise to her poetic church endeavor. The church of her poetry recuperates Margaret beyond herself now that the aesthetic space created for her has collapsed along with her real-world fortunes.

In providing space for Lanyer first to house Margaret in her time of need, and second to meet Margaret in that space and partake of her church mission, “Cookeham” plays perhaps the most vital role in the *Salve Deus* volume. Margaret's performance of her social identity will not repair its fractures on the grounds of “Cookeham,” but in its ruins she finds salvation, because “Cookeham” lays the foundations for that reparation to be carried out elsewhere in the volume. The poetic work that Lanyer's images of house and church do to vouchsafe Margaret's

lastingness become the metonymic source from which Lanyer's larger poetic project emerges, as it gives definition and direction to her reparative goals. It is, then, to the outcome of these directives in the epistles that I now turn.

4. Introductory Epistles

In this final segment, I want to look at the way the language of church architecture functions in Lanyer's dedicatory epistles, and how it becomes part of her defense of her work as reparative. While this approach to the volume may seem counterintuitive, reading the introductory epistles last illuminates Lanyer's intentional linking of each of the three separate parts of the text to one another. Indeed, textual evidence suggests that these epistles were actually written last: while the "Salve Deus" and "Cookeham" share page signatures which indicate that their leaves were grouped together as one textual unit, the introductory materials have a completely different set of signatures, suggesting that Lanyer wrote them last and added them in before publication.⁴² This provides two ways of reading the volume – from beginning to end, as the ordering of the materials present themselves, and from earliest to last printed. By reading the latter way, I demonstrate how Lanyer's gradual creation of a text-church out of the subject matter of her poetry provides a language and a context from which she can argue for her poetic purpose in the dedicatory materials.

Lanyer advertises her volume of poetry in these dedications as the conduit through which she, by bringing her readers into the sphere of Margaret's church, redeems both the readers and Margaret herself. Through allusions to her earlier descriptions of Margaret and Cookeham, Lanyer argues that her text is a church space where her readers are shown hospitality and fed the

⁴². In the first edition (1611), the introductory epistles go from a1-f3; then the "Salve Deus" starts over again from A1-H1, and "Cookeham" runs from H2-I1.

religious feast of Margaret's own virtue that can only be aesthetically portrayed in "Cookeham." Lanyer invites her readers to become churches in themselves by reading her poem and imitating Margaret, and she thus builds a "congregation" of the church of Margaret Clifford out of the ruins of "Cookeham."

The elements of church and priestly poet figure have already been identified in the dedications as features of Lanyer's larger religious goals. Lynette McGrath, for example, asserts that Lanyer relies on religious and ecclesiastical imagery to "connect her role as poet-priest with the didactic and saving role of Christ."⁴³ Her conception of Lanyer's argument, with its emphases on Christian virtue and the giving up of earthly possessions, assumes that Lanyer's goal is to interpellate the readers into the real, historical Church through the poem, since female reader and female character become what Theresa DiPasquale calls "icons" of the true Church through their virtue, and Lanyer "as prophet ... rewrites the Bible from a female perspective, proclaiming the radical implications of Christ's incarnation in a body born of woman" for the benefit of her readers.⁴⁴ But the references to the other poems suggest that her conception of herself as priest presiding over the church of her poetry is *also* part of how she makes her own argument for the place her poetry plays in that process, and that the church language and purposes also serve to characterize her work and role as reflections of, and challenges to, that institution.

In the midst of this endeavor in the dedications, she describes her poetic identity, in the words of Achsah Guibbory, as being "like the priests of the Church who, in celebrating Holy Communion, offer Christ to the congregation."⁴⁵ But in the context of the volume as a whole, the

⁴³. "Metaphoric Subversions," 104.

⁴⁴. "Sacred Feminine," 361.

“church” of readers over which Lanyer presides is the church of Margaret Clifford that she had established in the Passion and in “Cookeham.” Her characterization of herself as the priest of this church is, moreover, part of a defense of her work and purpose that she mounts throughout the epistles. In her epistolary prose address to Margaret, Lanyer creates an elaborate analogy between herself and Peter, the spiritual head of the Church on earth:

I may say with Saint Peter: “silver nor gold have I none” ... but as Saint Peter gave health to the body, so I deliver you the health of the soule, which is this most pretious pearl of all perfection, this rich diamond of devotion, this perfect gold growing in the veines of that excellent earth of the most blessed Paradice, wherein our second Adam had his restlesse habitation. The sweet incense, balsums, odours, and gummies that flow from that beautifull tree of Life, sprung from the roote of Jessie ... giveth grace to the meanest and most unworthy hand that will undertake to write thereof ... therefore, good Madame, I deliver the inestimable treasure of all elected soules, to bee perused at convenient times; as also, the mirrour of your most worthy minde ... to be a light unto those that come after, desiring to tread in the narrow path of virtue that leads the way to heaven. (“To the Lady Margaret Countess Dowager of Cumberland,” 34-35.)

In her defense to Margaret, Lanyer deploys the church analogy so as to position herself as a poet in relation to Margaret as the patron. By drawing a parallel between herself and St. Peter, the one who gives “health to the soul” and upon whom Christ built his Church, she places herself in his eventual role as the first Pope of the Church, with Margaret as its head, Christ, and the congregation of readers its Body, the faithful.⁴⁶ This claim is as subversive as her alternative tree-church, and even more arrogant; for a woman to claim the mantle of priesthood to such a degree was unheard of in the English Protestant church.⁴⁷ Lanyer’s assertion in this regard is a

⁴⁵. “The Gospel,” 122.

⁴⁶. Christ called Peter the “rocke [upon] which I wil buylde my Church” (Matthew 16:18). *Pace* McGrath who sees Margaret as the head and Lanyer as writing its “foundational text” (Keohane, “Radical Unfolding,” 361).

⁴⁷. Most notably, see John Knox’s strident excoriation of female church leadership, the *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (Geneva: J. Poullain and A. Rebul, 1558). See also Guibbory, “The Gospel According to Aemilia”; Keohane, “Radical Unfolding of the Passion”; Esther Richey, “Subverting Paul.”

bold declaration that claims extraordinary power for both her and Margaret in defiance of the male-dominated institutions that supported their dispossession.

In that characterization of her role, Lanyer then makes a claim for her poetry's didactic purposes by posing her work as a ministry that imparts Margaret's own goodness to others and brings them into her sphere as members of her church. In Lanyer's comparison of herself to Peter, she alludes to the passage in the Book of Acts in which Peter, in the process of forming the early Church, heals a blind beggar asking for coins, claiming that "Silver and golde have I none," but only the grace of Christ (Acts 3:6). In proffering the text to her readers in a similar manner, Lanyer claims that her text will offer that same grace to her readers. This is because the source of that grace in the poetry is its subject, Margaret herself, emanating power as a Christ-figure. In this configuration, Margaret's virtuous character constitutes a form of Christian grace transmitted through the text. Lanyer characterizes the text as a "mirror" of Margaret's "worthy minde" whose reflection illuminates her traits of virtue for others' imitation; her appearance in the text is meant "to be a light unto those that come after," leading "all elected souls" in "the narrow path of virtue that leads to heaven." The description of "elected souls" alludes to the distinctly Calvinist theology of election that had shaped the English Church during Elizabeth's reign. This assertion codes her ideal audience as an English Church community in which the readers are interpellated into the congregation through their encounter with Margaret's reflection in it.

The source of Margaret's Christ-like grace and power in the text, however, is the imaginative landscape of the poetic "Cookeham" itself. Lanyer argues that her volume acts as a habitation for Christ, since his tree grows in "this gold growing in the veines of Paradice," which is her very book. The "Tree of Life" is usually an allusion to the tree of the Garden in Genesis, but given its Biblical conflation with the "Tree of Jessie," or God's chosen people of Israel, here

it also refers to Christ himself, who according to Old Testament prophecy sprang from the “root of Jesse.”⁴⁸ Indeed, the “second Adam” of this description is, according to 1 Corinthians, Christ himself, making this Paradise a firmly post-Resurrection space.⁴⁹ That paradisiacal landscape is precisely the one created in the lines of “Cookeham.” Lanyer’s description of its flowering and thriving alludes to the church architecture that appeared on the landscape around Margaret, whose presence exudes Christ’s grace. In alluding to it here in the dedication, Lanyer uses the habitation she had built in “Cookeham” for Margaret as the basis for the whole volume, projecting the imagery into a defense of her work as the receptacle of Christ’s grace, to be given to the readers through the poet who presides over it. “Cookeham,” it seems, was only a foretaste, an establishment of terms writ small, whose purpose in redeeming Margaret’s situation is merely a preparation for Lanyer’s larger poetic goals.

By intertwining the imagery of “Cookeham” into her dedicatory defense, Lanyer attempts to make her whole *volume* the reparative space for Margaret that the real Cookeham could not be. This is because Lanyer claims the volume as the space in which she makes sure her readers are “fed.” Throughout the epistles, Lanyer frequently refers to her volume of poetry as “this pure unspotted Lamb” (ll. 319). In her letter to Queen Anne, she says of Eve’s portrayal in the poem that “she must entertain you to this feast / To which your highness is the welcom’st guest / For here I have prepar’d my Paschal Lambe / The figure of that living Sacrifice / Who dying, all th’infernall powers o’ercame / That we with him t’Eternitie might rise; / This precious Passover feed upon O Queene / Let your fair virtues in my Glass be seen.” (“To the Queenes Most excellent Majestie,” ll. 90). Though Lanyer’s claims both that the oak is a church and she is a priest are arrogant in their defiance of the established Church, those claims are nothing in

⁴⁸. Isaiah 11:10, Romans 15:12.

⁴⁹. 1 Corinthians 15:45. Christ is the second Adam, “the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit.”

comparison to the almost blasphemous claim here that her text is the very Paschal Lamb, or Christ himself. The “Lambe” to which Lanyer compares her text is the Paschal Lamb, the sacrifice at the center of Passover which then becomes the Eucharist after the Last Supper. The book as Paschal Lamb is, like the Eucharist itself, what in the “Salve Deus” she calls a “figure of that living sacrifice,” or Christ (who inhabits the landscape of Cookeham), the original “spotless Lamb” whose sufferings identify him as such elsewhere in the text.⁵⁰

Lanyer then exploits the multiple significances of the Passover Lamb in Scripture to create a nexus of meanings that designate her text as a meeting space between her readers and their bridegroom-Savior. As the Eucharistic Paschal Lamb, her text is, outrageously, the focal point of the service in the Church of England liturgy – the premiere sacrament that re-enacts the sacrificial mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. In the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, the English Church's statement of official doctrine, the Eucharist is understood as a partaking “by faith” in the Body and Blood of Christ, and through that act, it joins each congregant one to the other as the figural Body of Christ, the Church.⁵¹ By inviting her devotees to her “Paschal Lambe,” she invites them to take part in the church ceremony of the text. And by repeating the invitation to Anne, to Margaret, and to her virtuous readers, she gathers each into community with the others around the text. The readers, in coming together as a community to partake of this Paschal Lamb, enact and create a church space around the text, as her very textual gathering of dedicatees acts as a church space, the place where she as poet-priest feeds the church of women readers.

In this conception of her book, Lanyer aggressively stresses the feasting aspect of the Eucharistic rite, and it is this facet of the Eucharist that allows her to use her poetry to fulfill

⁵⁰ . “Salve Deus,” 411: “Sweet Lambe of God, his deare beloved Sonne,” and again “Salve Deus,” 1650, “When lo that spotless lamb so void of blame / that for us died, whose sins did make him bleed.”

⁵¹ . “Article 28: Of the Lord's Supper,” *The Thirty-Nine Articles, 1563*. Cited in *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook*, ed. David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 67.

Margaret's aristocratic identity by proxy. In the Church of England, the Eucharist signifies salvation by inviting the congregants to take part in Christ through food; in fact, it is specifically defined in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* as "the Lord's Supper," stressing its function as a commemoration of the last meal Christ shared with his disciples.⁵² The Last Supper, in turn, was a Jewish Passover feast, in which the people of Israel are called to eat the sacrifice made for them in Genesis before the flight from Egypt – whence originated the "Paschal Lamb," the animal whose sacrifice guaranteed the *pasach*, or passing over, of God's wrath over the houses of the Israelites.⁵³ Lanyer evokes this holy meal by inviting Anne to "feed upon" her Paschal Lamb, and later, in her epistle to Lady Katherine, she calls her poetry "this heavenly book that I present to you; / On heavenly food let them vouchsafe to feede ... / This spotlesse lambe, this perfit patient dove" ("To the Lady Katherine, Countesse of Suffolk," ll. 51-64). Lanyer's text becomes the feast, the "heavenly food," that her readers "feed" on by reading, so that, as Lynette McGrath argues, "Lanyer's act of writing produces a feast – a gastronomic exchange between writer and reader" in service to the goal of community formation.⁵⁴

For McGrath, the purpose of this conception of the text as a feast is strictly religious, allowing Lanyer "to connect her role as poet-priest with the didactic and saving role of Christ" by acting as "a provider of spiritual-poetic food" to her readers (104-105). But I want to stress that Lanyer defines this "spiritual food," and her pastoral role, within the terms of *hospitality*. In her exhortation to Anne, she says that the character of Eve who provides the "Paschal Lamb" of the text "must entertaine you to this feast / To which your Highnesse is the welcom'st guest" ("To the Queenes Most Excellent Majestie," ll. 83-84). Whereas in "Cookeham" Margaret had

⁵² . Ibid.

⁵³ . "Paschal," (A.2) *OED*.

⁵⁴ . "Metaphoric Subversions," 107.

performed charity in an aesthetic church as a substitute for the missing framework of her hospitality, here the talk of feasting, entertaining, and guests re-contextualizes the textual church of the volume within the framework of guest-host relations, as the narrative acts as host to the reader as a guest, proffering the Paschal Lamb of the text as the feast upon which readers “feed” by reading. In fact, the designation of the text as a *feast*, and the language of hospitality used here to describe the readers’ engagement with it, suggests that the Paschal Lamb of the text is actually the very feast missing from “Cookeham.” It just happens to be proffered within Lanyer’s book rather than in the great hall of Margaret’s missing house, and the text itself acts as the central meeting place for the performance of hospitality to others, given by Lanyer as authorial head and executrix of Margaret’s church. The concept of the whole volume as the church described in “Cookeham,” then, redeems Margaret’s aristocratic identity by acting as the true space of her hospitality to others. Whereas in Cookeham the church on the landscape stood in for the missing house and its great hall, here in the epistles the volume-as-church becomes the transformative image through which hospitality can finally be truly expressed. The arboreal church in Cookeham that compensated for Margaret’s loss is the foundation for Lanyer’s description of her poetic work, and the means by which that loss is re-gained and re-deployed.

By partaking in the feast of the book, Lanyer promises, readers receive virtue through the grace of Margaret by being shaped in her image. She does this by using the church-text to transform readers into *new* Brides of Christ, effectively making them over in Margaret’s image to be recipients of Christ’s redemptive work, just as she herself has already been made over through the life-giving kiss from Margaret’s tree. In “To all Vertous Ladies in generall,” she argues that her book is a training in virtue for her readers, as “Each blessed Lady that in virtue spends / your precious time to beautifie your soules / come wait on hir whom winged Fame

attends / ... Let this faire Queene not unattended bee / When in my Glasse she daines herselfe to see" (ll. 1-7). In this reiteration of her earlier claim that her poetry is a "mirror" to Margaret's virtue, the ladies' reading of the book is posed as an "attendance" on the "winged lady" Virtue, which implies that they are in fact attending to Margaret herself, whom the book reflects as a "glass." This is still a theologically Protestant claim, for the virtue gained is not accomplished by works, but bestowed by the grace shown in Margaret's image.⁵⁵ But this claim assumes that the book accomplishes this virtuous training by acting as a church where, like Margaret, the readers can become churches. In exhorting them to read, Lanyer urges them to "Put on your wedding garments every one, / The Bridegroome stays to entertaine you all; / Let Virtue be your guide, for she alone / Can leade you right that you can never fall; / And make no stay for fear he should be gone; / But fill your lamps with oyle of burning zeale / That to your Faith he may his Truth reveale" ("To all vertuous Ladies in Generall," ll. 8-14). Drawing on the parable of the bridesmaids in Matthew 25, the book invites the readers to become Brides of Christ in their own right, through the the act of reading the book.⁵⁶ In doing so, they become like Marageret, the pre-eminent Bride of Christ in Lanyer's Passion narrative. And their guide for this process is the example of Margaret herself, whose qualities are mirrored in the text as the personification of Virtue. Margaret, the image of Virtue, becomes their guide as brides to their Bridegroom, Christ. Because the text is a reflection of Margaret's virtue, in reading it they are invited into her role as Bride by gaining that virtue.

⁵⁵. The fact that virtue is a gift by grace is in line with Lanyer's thoroughly English Protestant outlook; although reading Lanyer as either Jewish or pseudo-Catholic once held some scholarly vogue on account of her "dark" complexion and Italian ancestry, scholars now accept that, given her education in the household of the very Calvinist Susan Bertie, she was Protestant, and theologically aligned with the Church of England (Woods, xvii).

⁵⁶. As it is expressed in Isaiah 62 and Matthew 25.

The readers' assumption of this Margaret-reflective identity happens because, by recasting the readers in Margaret's role, Lanyer invites the readers into the space of hospitality recreated for her in the text. For the moment that marks the readers' assumption of the Bride role is their *own* wedding feast, which the text leads them to attend. In her analogy, Christ dwells in the text, where he "entertains" his Brides, placing Christ himself within the framework and space of Margaret's hospitality; by exhorting her audience to read, she figuratively invites them into the hospitable space of the text, where their redemptive roles are given in relation to Christ, their Bridegroom. The centerpiece of that space and that relationship, again, is the wedding feast: in a later epistle to Margaret's daughter Anne, Lanyer professes hope for the efficacy of her text in inspiring Margaret's virtue in her readers, since "One spark of grace sufficient is to fill / Our lamps with oyle, ready when he doth call / to enter with the Bridegroom to the feast / where he that is the greatest may be least" ("To the Lady Anne," ll. 13-14). Her poetry, in acting as the "spark" that lights the torches, leads the Bride to the Bridegroom by way of the wedding "feast." This allows the Bride-reader to partake both of the text and that which the text is meant to fulfill – the Eucharistic Paschal Lamb of the text, and the great feast of the missing house, respectively. The readers assume the role of Margaret in this relationship, then, by participating in this hospitable feast, which marks their engagement with Christ in the text. In this participation, they can partake of the same redemption that Margaret herself has; the setting of this feast, the church-text, is the place that ushers in the eternal redemption of the Church at the end of time, described by Jesus in the Gospels as the new creation where "he that is least among you all, he shalbe great" (Luke 9:48). The readers, in Margaret's identity as the Church, are offered the possibility of resurrective redemption through reading and engagement with the text that houses Margaret's identity and purpose as the Church.

Through this transformative identification with Margaret in Lanyer's poetry, the readers are invited to become church spaces in their own right, where they in turn can nurture others as Margaret nurtured them. In a segment comparing the training in virtue her poetry offers to the virtue of classical wisdom texts, Lanyer urges her readers to "Adorn your temples with faire *Daphnes* crowne / The never-changing Laurel, alwaies greene; / Let constant hope all worldly pleasures drowne / In wise *Minerva's* paths be alwaies seen. / Or With bright *Cynthia* though faire *Venus* frown; / With *Esop* cross the post of every doore / Where Sinne would riot, making Virtue poore" ("To all vertuous Ladies in Generall," ll. 22-28). The reading of this poem is characterized as an act of Virtue that can correct sinful and destructive forces by rebuilding them into sacred structures. "*Daphne's* crowne," which is the green "Laurel," and "*Minerva's* path," and "bright *Cynthia*" are all, in these instances, Greco-Roman personifications of Virtue, previously established as Margaret, on whom the readers attend by reading. This reading is characterized as an "adorning of temples," which on the surface alludes to the temples of a forehead as one wears the laurel and the crown in Greek society to denote achievements of wisdom. But it also puns homophonically on Temples as buildings to be "adorned," suggesting that the readers are, in their very bodies, church structures, whose forehead "temples" act as the head of the temple of their body.

By inhabiting bodily temples, the readers can "build" themselves up through the virtue they gain in Lanyer's text. She describes the reading of her text as an act of "crossing the post" of a door with the Biblical herb known as *hyssop* – alternately spelled *issop*, *ysop* or, as demonstrated here, *esop*.⁵⁷ This herb was known in Scripture for purgative or cleansing properties in the Bible, most famously in Psalm 51 ("purge me with hyssop that I may be clean"), and signified the repentance that enables the penitent's redemption. It was also, more

⁵⁷. "Hyssop" (A.1), *OED*.

significantly, the herb used to mark the doorposts of the people of Israel during Passover in memory of their flight from Egypt,⁵⁸ which eventually Jesus re-imagined as the Eucharist at the Last Supper, in which it is Christ's blood shed for humanity that fulfills the Passover eternally for all.⁵⁹ By crossing the posts of the doors to their "Temples" with "Esop," then, each reader actively creates herself as a structure where the Eucharist is held, affiliated with Christ's salvation, death, and resurrection, and where Communion takes place. In other words, the reading of virtue in the poetry allows the reader to "build" themselves into churches.

Through that building activity, the church-readers at last bring Margaret's church identity to completion by re-creating the space of the new creation through their virtue. For the end of their virtuous living is, indeed, eternal life with Christ their Bridegroom. Lanyer invites them by reading to board "*Titan's* shining chariot," "wherein you must ride / Let simple Doves, and subtill serpents guide. / Come swifter than the motion of the Sunne / To be transfigured with our loving Lord" ("To all vertuous Ladies in Generall," ll. 48-51). Her exhortation to wisdom by "simple doves" and "subtill serpents" evokes Christ's command to his disciples to "be ye therefore wise as serpentes and innocent as doues," which he commands as he sends them out as "sheppe in the middes of wolues" to spread his mission throughout the world (Matthew 10:16). His commendation to the paradox of wise innocence assumes that such virtue must meet the demands of a world whose sinful nature renders it incomplete and unredeemed. Christ's command invokes the restlessness, the already-not-yet tension, of a world still in the process of redemption. Such, Lanyer argues in her comparison, is the nature of the wisdom to be gathered

⁵⁸. Exodus 12: 22: "Take a bunche of hyssope, and dip it in the blood that is in the bassen, and strike the lintel and the dore of his house, until the morning."

⁵⁹. Hyssop is also the branch soaked vinegar that was given to Christ during the Crucifixion (John 19:29), and also as part of ritual sacrifices in Numbers (19:6).

from her text. But in its practice, this wise innocence nevertheless promises its final redemption, as it “transfigures” the readers. Specifically, by gaining the wisdom and virtue of Margaret in the text, the readers can identify with their Bridegroom, Christ, and in that identification are transfigured “with” him by proxy. In that transfiguration, they take part in his redemptive promise and triumph over the death and sin whose presence necessitated “wise innocence” in the first place. To read Lanyer’s poetry is thus to gain a redemptive potential.

That redemptive potential has the power, finally, to fulfill not only Margaret’s performance of hospitality, but also to recreate and redeem the lost space the poem had tried to recuperate. Lanyer promises her readers that if they read her poetry, “God’s holy Angels will direct your doves / And bring your Serpents to the fields of rest / Where he doth stay that purchast all your loves / in Bloody torments, when he died oppressed. / There shall you find him in those pleasant groves / of Sweet *Elyzium*, by the Well of Life / Whose Crystal Springs do purge the world of Strife” (“To all vertuous Ladies in Generall,” ll. 57-63). The doves and serpents, earlier a sign for the paradoxical tension created by redemptive potential in still-corrupted life, here become catalysts for its fulfillment. After prodding their readers to virtuous action, here they lead them to “rest,” and to the final dwelling place where Christ, in whom they were transformed, “stays” in static peacefulness after his “bloody torments” accomplish their salvation. Virtue seems to lead its readers to a space that eternally fulfills all that Lanyer’s “Cookeham” could never be. This “sweet Elyzium, by the well of life” is a representation of heaven, syncretized with Greco-Roman mythology and “purged” of earthly strife. But the “pleasant groves” and “crystal springs” of Elyzium allude directly to some of the most prominent of topographical features Lanyer had previously associated with Margaret in the volume: the very “pleasant groves” of the “Paradise” in which Margaret commanded Lanyer to write the

volume, and the “crystal springs” of Margaret’s natural church in “Cookeham” (“Salve Deus,” ll. 21-24; “Cookeham,” ll. 72). This suggests that the eternal Heaven to which the readers are led in the volume, which represents their very salvation and redemption, is itself a redeemed version of Margaret’s earthly residence of dispossession, the earthly “Cookeham.” Their virtue thus leads them to a landscape that the church-readers, including Margaret, can inhabit eternally as the culmination of both charity and hospitality. What Margaret could not accomplish through Cookeham in earthly terms is here fulfilled by the community of readers who partake in her representation in the text, building the church in themselves eternally through the reading of her poetry. Lanyer thus through a radical, almost blasphemously confident assertion of her own religious power, assures Margaret’s eternal lastingness, in spite of her circumstances, by using the foundation of her losses to build a poetic church that, in its resurrective power, establishes a textual church that will perpetuate her redemption in the community of women readers.

5. Conclusion

Although my purpose throughout this chapter has been to identify Lanyer’s ongoing deployment of Margaret as a religious figure in Lanyer’s defense of her poetry in the *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, I have largely done so at the expense of ignoring the very real circumstances that necessitated such a defense – the economic straits by which Lanyer herself was circumscribed as an impoverished female poet without steady patron. Though her claims all pertain to the rebuilding of Margaret and her readers, she is, at heart, also attempting to repair herself and her own fortunes after Margaret’s dispossession by successfully gaining new sustenance from one of the readers whom she hopes to convince.

The dire need for patronage that drives her defense appears, at first glance, to affirm that which her earliest scholars such as Barbara Lewalski had asserted, which was that the religious

tropes and themes of the *Salve Deus* were subordinate to its secular aims for patronage, and that the theological content of her poetry was not indicative of her own devotion or religious aims.⁶⁰

But as the relationship between charity and hospitality demonstrates, economic and religious discourses in the early modern period were virtually inseparable. Her defense may have been motivated by true need, but her conception of church community as a space where need is met, and her bid for patronage, are not mutually exclusive. Her expression of need in the economic terms of patronage are also a demonstration of certainty that she shared fellowship in the Body of Christ, and might ask for provision as well as give it.

Nevertheless, Aemilia Lanyer was never fully successful in gaining patronage; though she died with solvency, she never achieved her rightful status as a noted poet in her lifetime.⁶¹ Nor, for that matter, did Margaret Clifford ever successfully regain her own fractured identity or that of her daughter's; after George Clifford's death, she, and then her daughter, spent forty years unsuccessfully suing for Anne's inheritance of the lands he had willed to male heirs, and Margaret died before their lands were recovered. But recovered they were, and Anne, "that sweet Lady sprung from *Clifford's* race ... in whose fair breast virtue then was hous'd" in reflection of Margaret's essence and image, continued the work of both ("Cookeham," ll. 93-97). Though there is no record of sustained contact between Lanyer and Anne after Lanyer's brief stay with the family, Anne's later care for her estates evinces a similar interest in reparation and redemption. Upon re-assuming control of her lands in 1649, Anne immediately undertook a series of renovations of multiple edifices that had fallen into disrepair since her father's death.

⁶⁰. See Barbara Lewalski, "Of God and Good Women: The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer" in *Silent But for the Word*, ed. Margaret Hannay. (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), 207; "Rewriting Patriarchy," 88; "Seizing Discourses and Reinventing Genres," in *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and the Canon*, ed Marshall Grossman. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 49-59.

⁶¹. Woods, xxx.

On each renovation she placed a plaque that proclaimed, with Isaiah 64, that as the Lord rebuilt Israel after its long exile, she, too, was “rebuilding the devastation of many generations.”⁶² Her reparation of her family’s lands, their identity, and their capacity to provide for others and create a Christian community around their estates into perpetuity, revives Lanyer’s original intent. And so Lanyer lived on in one of her ideal readers, even though she did not succeed in the manner she had planned – a quirk of history that, in itself, seems somewhat reparative.

⁶². Alice Friedman, “Constructing an Identity in Prose, Plaster and Paint: Lady Anne Clifford as Writer and Patron of the Arts,” in *Albion’s Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 359-76. 361.

CHAPTER 4

The Church of George Herbert: Rebuilding the Poet in *The Temple*

1. Introduction

Despite the speaker's claims in "The Church Porch" ("Perrhiranteriorum") that "A verse may find him, who a sermon flies, / And turn delight into a sacrifice," and that a "Verser" "may chance / Ryme thee to good, and make a bait of pleasure" (ll. 3-6), George Herbert's *The Temple* (1633) is full of signs that all is not well with the poet's craft.¹ As his appeal to his audience's virtue suggests, Herbert sees poetry as an inherently didactic production, meant to edify readers by bringing them closer to God. But in "Jordan (II)," the speaker claims that though initially his poetic language, "[c]urling with metaphors a plain intention," would "[d]eck the sense" of moral and religious virtues in a palatable way, he finds himself unable to convey those precepts in poetic language, as "I often blotted what I had begunne;, / This was not quick enough, and that was dead" (ll. 5-10). Somehow, the speaker's work has lost its efficacy. In "Deniall," the speaker suggests that something has happened spiritually to make his poetics falter: "When my devotions could not pierce / Thy silent eares; / Then was my heart broken, as was my verse:/ My breast was full of fears / And disorder" (ll.1-4). The disruption in his ability to be close to God in "devotion" has "broken" both himself and his verse. The erratic metrics of this first stanza reflect the frenetic "fears" and "disorder" of his sinfulness as a state of broken thinking, broken verse, and broken heart.

The solution to this breakage in spiritual and poetical wholeness is in the architectural image of the Temple that pervades the volume. Herbert makes this imagery a mainstay of his

¹. Cited in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox. (Cambridge: New York, 2007), 50. All references are to this edition.

poetry, and it frequently appears both in the more famous church furniture poems and elsewhere as a way for the speaker to wrestle with the effects of sin in his heart and his poetic endeavors.

But how might a metaphorical Temple provide the means of redemption for poetry itself?

This chapter extends the subject of this dissertation to the work of Herbert's *The Temple*. Whereas Spenser and Lanyer use church imagery and Biblical discourses to edify their poetic subjects and defend their own poetic efficacy, here Herbert starts with the premise that poetry is edifying but suggests that it is he himself who needs rebuilding in order to deploy it. In this chapter I argue that Herbert uses the imagery of church buildings as a means to portray the spiritual process of being shaped into a poet whose work can edify his readers. For Herbert, poetic efficacy is the ability to embody and convey the presence of God to readers for spiritual edification – an ability that, because of his own sinful predisposition, he no longer has because his sin makes him feel distant from God.

Herbert's interest in the physical restructuring of church buildings corresponds with a series of programs and policies for parish church renovations undertaken in the English Church of his day.² These projects were confined mostly to the 1620s and early 30s, during the period in which the English Church turned towards what Ramie Targoff refers to as a “program of revitalizing public devotion by reemphasizing the formal and sacramental aspects of religious practice,” otherwise known as “the beauty of holiness” movement.³ This program was undertaken on the belief that church architecture embodies the presence of Christ in the congregation, in order to shape it in his image and allow them to partake in his redemption. For

². See Peter Lake, “The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness” in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Hampshire: MacMillan Press, 1993), 161-185.

³. Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 89.

Laudians,⁴ the church space is the figurative manifestation of Christ's own body, meant to hold his presence by holding and shaping his congregation of followers. To argue that Herbert shares an investment in this early Laudian effort to build up the spiritual Church through the physical church is to take an extreme minority stance, as several knowledgeable scholars, from Daniel Doerkson to Richard Strier to Stanley Fish, have argued eloquently that Herbert is primarily a Calvinist and not a Laudian at all.⁵ However, I am only claiming affiliation for Herbert with early Laudian praxis, in the projects of church renovation, and not with later Laudian politics or theology.

Specifically, Herbert draws on this discourse by characterizing his own salvation as the process of rebuilding his heart in the shape of a church. He describes his own sinfulness and subsequent repentance as a spiritual "breaking," or tearing down of the human architecture of his heart, and then asks God to replace it with the "architecture" of his presence. God's rebuilding work allows the speaker to create more efficacious poetry, which becomes a reification of his

⁴ In keeping with the rest of my dissertation, my interest here is in ecclesiastical practice, not theology per se. Throughout this chapter I use "Laudianism" as a short hand for these renovation projects, but I am interested *only* in these projects and not in the later theology or politics of the movement.

⁵ Daniel Doerkson, *Conforming to the Word: Herbert, Donne, and the English Church Before Laud*. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997). Doerkson supports his claim with evidence that Herbert's Calvinism was so strident that Laudians refused to publish his book after his death (67); Stanley Fish's *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Richard Strier, *Love Known: Theology and Experience in George Herbert's Poetry*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). For more evidence of Herbert as theologically and politically Calvinist, see also: Doerkson's "Recharting the 'Via Media' of Spenser and Herbert," *Renaissance and Reformation*, 8:3 (1984), 215-225; Lisa Gordis, "The Experience of Covenant Theology in George Herbert's 'The Temple,'" *The Journal Of Religion*, 76:3 (1996), 383-401. Indeed, the closest most will come to claiming affiliation between Herbert and Laudianism are those that admit to an "ambivalence" of Herbert's about the Laudian ceremonialism. See Achsah Guibbory, who claims that the Temple "expresses not a harmonious, peaceful middle way, but rather the deeply conflicted via media of the seventeenth-century English church," (45) which straddles Puritan and ceremonialist ideologies uncertainly. *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); see also Christopher Hodgkins, "The Church Legible: George Herbert and the External of Worship," *The Journal of Religion*, 71:2 (1991), 217-241. For a more general overview of the similarities and differences between Laudian and Calvinist worldviews, see Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker*. (Boston: Allen & Unwin 1988); and Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

heart, and fills the poetry with divine presence to make God accessible to the poems' intended readers. Like Foxe and Lanyer before him, he turns his poetic work into a "text-church" that houses readers and poet together in their engagement with the poetry. In sharing it, the readers' own hearts are shaped into a community whose collective edification allows them to become church-spaces in imitation of the poem. In this capacity, the readers can become spaces for God to meet others through them as well, allowing Herbert's poetry to extend the work of God in the world.⁶

My reading engages scholarly conversations about the centrality of Temple imagery and building themes in Herbert's work. Sarah Hanley, among others, has demonstrated that "the title image ... is one of the major unifying devices of the volume," particularly in the five "furniture poems," which "focus attention on the symbol of the church as heart, as building, as body of the faithful, and as the New Jerusalem."⁷ The unifying trope of the Temple in the text has also been shown to be integral to the text's didactic, devotional purpose of edifying his audience: John Wall calls *The Temple* "an extended exercise in 'building' in all senses of that word. Basic to Herbert's strategies in *The Temple* is this multiple play with 'building' as both noun and verb form, in its references to the Temple itself as a church built of words and to the process of writing and reading as a process of building."⁸ This furthers Herbert's didactic goals; as Wall puts it, "the devotional poet who builds a fit temple in language edifies his readers by leading them to examine their own experience as spiritual and linguistic creatures. Herbert's own

⁶. I refer to the hypothetical audience of Herbert's poetry in the plural throughout this chapter because, as this claim indicates, Herbert's concern for building up the church as a community leads me to assume that his audience is a community as well.

⁷. "Temples in the Temple: George Herbert's Study of the Church," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* Vol 8:1 (1968), 121-135. 121. For further analysis of Herbert's allusions to the Old Testament Temple, see Chana Bloch, *Spelling the Word: George Herbert and the Bible*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

⁸. *Transformations of the Word: Spenser, Herbert, Vaughan*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 173.

experience embodied in the long devotional centre, ‘The Church,’ can contribute to building in others.”⁹ My reading demonstrates the extent to which Herbert’s well-studied religious and poetical projects are part of the larger discourse about ecclesiology that stretches back before John Foxe, even, and shows that his tropes are all established religious themes that he draws from, rather than creates.

What sets my exploration apart from earlier readings is my observation that Herbert points the poetic lens at himself as poet. Wall and Hanley primarily focus on Herbert’s concern for edifying his readers; as Wall puts it, “to read Herbert as he would be read is to engage in the worship of that church as a people on the way, constantly overcoming estrangement, adding to the building, and thus growing into ‘an holy temple in the Lord.’”¹⁰ I would like, however, to move the focus from his hypothetical audience to the poet himself, and to explore the ways in which the speaker understands his own edification as both a Christian and a poet.

Similarly, while other scholars are concerned with the text’s devotional purpose, I look at it as a defense of poetry. *The Temple*’s seemingly generic devotional imagery has led some to read it as the various discrete experiences of an everyman Christian, but my argument assumes a specific speaker – namely, the figure of the poet who writes poetry about creating poetry. I also assume a unified locus of description, and argue that the “heart” as it appears in these poems is in fact the same heart throughout – the one belonging to the poet – that encounters transformation from poem to poem. As James White has noted, the poems – particularly the church furniture

⁹. *Transformations*, 173.

¹⁰. *Ibid.*, 173. For more on the devotional and edifying aims of Temple imagery in Herbert’s poetry, see Frances Cruickshank, *Verse and Poetics in George Herbert and John Donne*. (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2010); Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Lyric*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Terry Sherwood, *Herbert’s Prayerful Art*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); John David Walker, “The Architectonics of George Herbert’s *The Temple*,” *ELH*, 29:3 (1962), 289-305.

and architectural sections – are meant to be read “in light of each other,” as sequences in which later poems answer earlier poems.¹¹ This assertion is supported by the centrality of a handful of images – of “fit” (or “unfit”) frames, “heartless” breasts, stones, and cement – within the church furniture poems. The recurrence of these images suggests that each separate poem exists on the same imaginative plane of the speaker’s heart, and that the speaker addressing the state of that heart is, at least in these poems, the poet’s persona, pondering both his heart and his poetic creation.

In my focus on the portrayal of poetic destruction, I am also concerned with the paradoxically “self-consuming” impulse of the text that has been most famously explored by Stanley Fish. For Fish, the speaker’s acknowledgment of his sinfulness and consequent poetic inefficacy is part of a larger “poetics of tension, reflecting a continuing dialectic between an egocentric vision which believes in, and is sustained by, the distinctions it creates, and the relentless pressure of a resolving and dissolving insight” which creates a “graduated series of ‘undoings’ and ‘letting gos’ that guide not just the speaker but also the audience to experience the process of letting go of the self.”¹² For Fish, the text reflects Calvinist notions of complete dependence on God, and the poems ask us to admit that “the claims of other entities to a separate existence, including the claims of the speakers and readers of these poems, must be relinquished. . . . Learning to “spell” in these terms is a self-diminishing action in the course of which the individual lets go, one by one, of all the ways of thinking, seeing, and saying that sustain the

¹¹. *This Book of Starres: Learning to Read George Herbert*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 167. For more on the unity or coherence of the *Temple* as a poetic text, see John Mulder, “George Herbert’s Temple: Design and Methodology,” *Seventeenth-Century News* Vol. 31 (1973), 37-38; George Watson, “The Fabric of Herbert’s The Temple,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26:3/4 (1963), 354-358.

¹². *Self-Consuming*, 175. For a later reader-response critique of the text’s intended effect on readers’ experience, see Ronald Primeau, “Reading George Herbert: Process vs. Rescue,” *College Literature* 2:1 (1975), 50-60.

illusion of his independence, until finally he is absorbed into the deity.”¹³ Herbert’s intent is thus to guide the reader to “let go” of self and embrace Christ.¹⁴ Whereas Fish examines this impulse in the abstract, I suggest that this self-erasure is a part of the broader architectural theme running through the text, and that Herbert’s self-erasure is, ironically, a means by which he might rebuild himself, bringing redemption to others through his own restoration.

2. The Poet’s Heart and Work: Spaces of God’s Presence

In *The Temple*, Herbert asserts that poetry has value insofar as it spreads news of God’s love to his audience by making his presence manifest in the poetry. This is most clearly portrayed in “Love (II),” where the speaker claims that poetry gains efficacy from God’s presence and power, and has as its purpose the bringing of readers into contact with that presence:

Immortall Heat, O let thy greater flame
 Attract the lesser to it: let those fires,
 Which shall consume the world, first make it tame;
 And kindle in our hearts such true desires,

 As may consume our lusts, and make thee way.
 Then shall our hearts pant thee; then shall our brain
 All her invention on thine Altar lay,
 And there in hymns send back thy fire again.

 Our eies shall see thee, which before saw dust;
 Dust blown by wit, till that they both were blinde:
 Thou shalt recover all thy goods in kinde,
 Who wert disseized by usurping lust:

 All knees shall bow to thee; all wits shall rise,
 And praise him who did make and mend our eies. (ll.1-14)

¹³. Ibid., 157.

¹⁴. This concept also seems to be related to Lutheran notion of passive righteousness that informs Calvinist theology. For his explanation of passive and active righteousness, see Luther’s “Commentary on Galatians (1531),” in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger. (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), 99-165.

This sonnet examines poetry as a mode of devotional praise that must be redeemed from man's sinful desires. Its description of the brain's sacrifice on God's altar as "invention" refers to poetic invention, and alludes to his discussion of poetic conceits in "Jordan (I)," which was initially titled "Invention" in Herbert's manuscript.¹⁵ He also refers to invention's redeemed outcome as "hymns," a metrical genre of religious worship that dictates praise in verse. The speaker's plea for God to "kindle in our hearts such true desires" in order for the "hymns" to "send back thy fire again" in praise suggests that what makes poetry effective as a devotional aid is the force and presence of God moving within it, making it holy. His description of God as an "immortal heat," whose flame "consume[s] our lusts" implies fire, which symbolically represents the Holy Spirit in Christian iconography.¹⁶ God's presence, working through poetry, then allows poetry to achieve its objective, which is to edify readers and lead them in praise to God: The "fire" of God within the poetry clears the "dust" of wit which ties human invention to the destruction and death associated with the temporal world. By clearing that dust of humanity from readers' eyes, God allows human wit to "rise," recalling resurrection and redemption, to a clearer understanding of God's work and plans in the world. This can then lead readers to a clearer picture of God, leading them to "bow" their knees to God, a sign of submission and repentance, and to "praise him who did make and mend our eies."

Herbert describes this state of divine communion through the central metaphor of the volume – the Temple itself – because the Temple is the most ancient symbol of God's presence

¹⁵ . Wilcox, 197.

¹⁶ . Flames have been associated with the Holy Spirit since Pentecost, in which the first disciples of Christ, after his ascension, "There appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:1). In light of the fact that Herbert is the first poet in this dissertation to write after the publication of the King James edition of the Bible in 1611, all references to Biblical passages in this chapter are from that edition (*The Bible: The Authorized King James Version*, ed Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)).

on earth among his people.¹⁷ The Temple – and church architecture more broadly – was a prominent metaphor by which Laudians in the 1620s described their desire to renovate churches. Specifically, in Laudian praxis, the Temple – and, by extension, church buildings more generally – were important because outward expressions of spiritual activity could shape inward belief. In *God's Holy House and Service* (1639), Fulke Robart asserts that “God’s worship is to be performed with outward expressions” because “there is such correspondency and sympathy between the soule and the body; as maketh to according one with another ... when the soule moveth forward in devotion towards God, the body will not be left behind, but will beare the soule company ... on the other side very man findeth in his own experience, that his soule doth sympathise with the temper of his body.”¹⁸ The physical embodiment of the spiritual means that the “correspondency” between them allows one to shape the other and vice versa.

Because of this, material objects were seen as capable of inspiring devotion within, so that “behind the insistence that ceremonies add ‘comeliness’ to the worship of God lay the conviction that art and the senses aid devotion.”¹⁹ In this schema, temples, as the ultimate outward expression of God’s presence, were the pattern into which congregants might be shaped. In *De Templis* (1638), for example, the anonymous author “R.T.” argued that “the artful construction of temples can ‘inflamm’ the ‘devout soule ... with pure and holy zeale.’”²⁰ In point of fact, the temple’s capacity for inflaming the soul was understood to be the source of all other

¹⁷. According to Esther Richey, Herbert also uses the structure of the “church” in the Temple to argue against Catholic understandings of the Church (“The Political Design of Herbert’s *The Temple*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 37:1 (1997), 73-96). Annabel Endicott, on the other hand, believes there is actually no correlation between the Hebrew and Herbertian Temples. See “The Structure of Herbert’s Temple: A Reconsideration,” *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 34:1 (1965), 226-237.

¹⁸. (London: The Cotes, 1639), 62-3.

¹⁹. *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁰. (London: R. Bishop, for Thomas Alchorne, 1638), 17.

externals' power. In the words of historian Peter Lake, "God's presence in the church suffused the whole structure and all the physical impedimenta used in his worship with an aura of holiness."²¹ Thomas Laurence, defending church ceremony, claimed in 1635 that "Gods presence is indeed everywhere but his residence especially there and though his essence be diffused through heaven and earth in Jeremy, his glory in Exodus is peculiar to the Tabernacle."²²

The Temple held this particular meaning and divine presence because in the redemptive arc of Christian history, the old Jewish Temple was a mirror of Christ, prefiguring his redemption of God's people through death and resurrection. In a sermon interpreting Christ's promise of "Solvite Templum," or to "destroy this temple and I will raise it [excitabo] in three days" (John 2:19), Laudian predecessor Lancelot Andrewes argues that

The Temple was as a great Mirrour, and the furniture, as lo many little glasses round about it. Take but the Arke (the epitome, as it were, of the Temple). The two Tables in it, the type of the true treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid in Him; they were broke first, there is solvate, but they were new hewen, and written over again, there is excitabo. The Pot of Manna (a perfect resemblance of him), the Vino, or the vessel being made of earth, so earthly; the Manna, the contents of it, being from heaven, so heavenly; the Mana (we know) would not keep past two days at the most, there is solvate; but, being put into the vino, the third day it came again to it selfe, and kept in the pot without putrifying ever after, there is excitabo ...in every and each of them, His destinie, whom they represented, *solvate* and *excitabo* in all.²³

Here Andrewes performs a typically Augustinian allegorical reading in which Old Testament events are significant because they point to the fulfillment of God's promise of redemption in the next epoch of Christian history. For example, Andrewes describes the Temple as a "mirror" in which the "furniture" and ceremonies of the Temple are a "type" or "resemblance" that reflects

²¹. *Laudian Style*, 165.

²². *Two Sermons* (Oxford: John Lichfield, 1635), 21.

²³. "A Sermon Preached before the King's Majesty, at White-hall, on the IX of April, being Easter Day," in *XCVII Sermons by the Right Honorable and Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Andrewes*. (London: Richard Badger, 1631), 484.

the characteristics of Christ, illustrating “His destinie” and what he will in future accomplish. In this typological reading, the external objects that pre-figure Christ gain significance as early signifiers of Christ’s redemptive death and resurrection: the tablets of law and the manna, for example, are first “broken” or “putrified,” – or, as Andrewes says it, “there is *solvate*,” or dissolution – and then “new hewen” and “came again to itself” after three days in imitation of Christ’s time in the tomb, so that “there is *excitabo*,” or raising up.

Because of this, church buildings, as the Temple’s inheritors, can shape Christ’s spiritual body – the congregation of Christ’s followers in the world – by representing his actual body in a way that allows his redemptive presence to be transmitted to those in the building. In describing the crucifixion, Andrewes says

This Temple of His bodie, the Spirit from the flesh, the flesh from the bloud was loosed quite. The rooffe of it (his head), loosed with thornes; the foundation (His feet with nayles. The side isles (as it were) His hands both likewise. And his bodie, as the bodie of the Temple, and His Heart in the midst of his body, as the Sanctum Sanctorum, with the speare: Loosed all. What He said, they did, and di it home ... This was a Temple of Flesh and bone, not one of lime and stone. Yet the ragged ruins of one of them demolished, will pitie a mans heart to see them; and make him say “Alas poore stones, what have these done?” yet the stones neither feele their beating down, nor see the deformed plight, they lye in But he, *Sic Solutum est, ut se solve sentires*, the solution of His skin, flesh, hands, feed and head, He was sensible of All, He saw the deformitie, he felt the paines of them all.²⁴

Christ’s body is described in terms of its Temple manifestation: his head is the metaphorical “roof,” his feet the foundation, his hands become “side isles,” or the aisles of a church sanctuary, and his heart constitutes the “holy of Holies,” the seat of the presence of God. His death is described as a “loosing” or destroying of the Temple – the very metaphor Christ himself used, and that Andrewes takes as his sermon’s text: the promise that Christ will, though his death, “destroy the Temple and then rebuild it in Three days” (John 2:19). In light of this association, the physical church, as Christ’s successor, is understood to be the new Temple, and manifests as

²⁴ . “Sermon,” 488.

His figurative body. After establishing the correlation between the Temple proper and “one of them” that follow it – the parish church – Andrewes anthropomorphizes church buildings so that they resemble the broken body of Christ on the cross. In a church “of lime and stone,” though they might not be sensible so as to “feelee their beating down,” the “ragged ruines” left when they are demolished resemble the “temple of flesh and bone” that is Christ. The church building must figuratively embody “His skin, flesh, hands, feet and head,” becoming a stand-in for Christ’s body. The correspondence between the physical church as a figurative body and the “soul” or presence of Christ in it facilitates the believer’s edification by the building.

For all these reasons, Laudians stressed the right care of church buildings, and William Laud, upon his ascendancy to the bishopric of London, instituted a series of mandatory renovation standards for all English churches. His *Articles of Visitation* (1633) required that visiting bishops check “Whether are your Church and Chapels, with the chancels thereof, and your parsonage or vicarage house, your parish almshouse and Church House, in good reparations? And are they employed to godly and their right holy uses? Is your Church, chancel, and Chapel decently and comely kept, as well within as without?”²⁵ Historical evidence suggests that Herbert took part in this renovation movement. Paul Dyck and others have described how Herbert’s church was famous for its ornament and Scriptural décor, meant to edify the Body of Christ that sat within it.²⁶ The rebuilding of his famous parish residence, the Layton parish in Bemerton, was central to his ministry there. Isaak Walton records that “the greatest part of the Parish Church was faln down, and that of which stood was so decayed, so little, and so useless, that the Parishioners could not meet to perform their duty,” and so Herbert “undertook the Re-

²⁵. *Articles to be Enquired of Within the Diocese of London*. (London: Church of England, 1633), E.1-2.

²⁶. “Locating the Word: The Textual Church and George Herbert’s Temple” in *Centered on the Word: Literature, Scripture, and the Tudor-Stuart Middle Way*. Newark: University of Delaware (2004), 22. See also Walker, 356.

edification of it, and made it so much his whole business, that he became restless till he saw it finished as it now stands, being, for the workmanship, a costly Mosaic: for the form, an exact Cross, and, for the decency and beauty, I am assured, it is the most remarkable Parish-Church that this nation affords.”²⁷

It seems reasonable to assume then, that if Herbert’s key metaphor in the text is the Temple, then his interest in renovation would manifest in the text as well. In his understanding of the Temple as the place of reenacting Christ’s destruction and resurrection, its purpose in bringing together God and man, and its place in edifying the believer all are intertwined in the poetic imagery. Because of this, when we see one aspect of this cluster of meanings in Herbert’s poetry, we can assume that it is meant to evoke its redemptive purpose.

The significance of this image to Herbert’s poetic purpose is explained in the poem placed in the very center of the volume, “Sion.” The description of the old Jewish Temple’s move in this poem from history to the human heart explicates the value and purpose of church architecture to the shaping of the believer:

Lord, with what glorie was thou serv’d of old,
 When Solomons temple stood and flourished!
 Where most things were of purest gold;
 The wood was all embellished
 With flowers and carvings, mystically and rare:
 All show’d the builders, crav’d the seers care.

 Yet all this glorie, all this pomp and state
 Did not affect thee much, was not thy aim;
 Something there was, that sow’d debate:
 Wherefore thou quitt’st thy ancient claim:
 And now thy Architecture meets with sinne;
 For all thy frame and fabrick is within. (ll.1-12)

²⁷. *The Life of Mr. George Herbert*, reprinted in *George Herbert: The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Tobin. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 265-314. 282-283. See Herbert’s apocryphal poem “To My Successor,” purportedly carved into the chimney of the parish residence (Wilcox, 33).

This poem initially expresses some ambivalence about ceremonialism and materiality in church spaces. The Temple's embellishment "with flowers and carvings, mysticall and rare," and "purest gold" alludes to the ornateness described in the Old Testament.²⁸ However, though the Temple is beautiful and attractive, there is a sense that it is also sinful: it has "something" about it that creates contention. Achsah Guibbory reads the poem as "explicitly anti-Ceremonial" because it enumerates "the seductions of art," which it "renounced for its supposed materiality, its appeal to the senses."²⁹ Because of this, she argues that "'Sion' leaves behind ceremonial worship as if all material temples, all 'human invention' and corporeal worship is 'carnall.'"³⁰ This implies that the architecture in itself has no inherent worth: the speaker later claims that "all Solomons sea of brasse and world of stone" have no use to God in themselves, and that they are "heavie things, / Tombes for the dead, not temples fit for thee" (ll. 17-19). The building does not "affect" God, and He subsequently "quitt'st" the Temple for the space "within" the human heart. This contrast between the ornateness of the Temple and the "frame and fabrick" of the human heart suggests that Herbert favors the inwardness of spiritual devotion over the ornateness of ceremonialism, a seeming rejection of the Laudian program.

However, the problem with the Temple in the poem is not that its ornate architecture is inherent sinful, but that the idolatry of its builders turns it into an object of human pride and worship. The Temple is described as having more significance to man than to God: it "show'd the builders, crav'd the seers care," suggesting that its object was to gain praise for its builders, and its purpose to be praised by the priests. But it "did not affect" God much because it did not serve his "aim" for the Temple. Rather than bring the congregation together, it "sow'd debate" or

²⁸. 1 Kings 5:8. See the description of the Temple in Lanyer's "To Cookeham" in Chapter 3.

²⁹. *Ceremony*, 56-57.

³⁰. *Ibid.*, 58.

contention – it failed to fulfill God’s purpose for the Temple. Though it has no inherent worth in itself, it also holds no inherent sin; its relative holiness or sinfulness is dependent on the approach one takes to its architectural purpose.³¹

Indeed, the extent to which God’s move “inward” still relies on imagery of architecture in this poem indicates that for Herbert, when used rightly, church architecture can be the material that *leads* to inward edification. For the poem retains the language of architecture in later stanzas as a way of describing that inwardness. When God abandons the outward for the inward, the shape He takes within the human heart still manifests as “Architecture.” The description of that architecture as the “frame and fabrick” of the heart implies that He should be the very matter which scaffolds the heart – the “frame” of a building that acts as a bolster to uphold the materials, and the “fabrick” that interweaves that material into a coherent shape. In other words, God does not abandon architecture for abstract spiritual existence; he abandons bad architecture for good architecture. This suggests that for Herbert, the language of architecture still has use as a means of metaphorically modeling the process of salvation, and the edification of the believer, thereby retaining its spiritual usefulness.

Specifically, the poem uses the metaphorical “Architecture” of God in the Temple to designate the heart as a new kind of church space that can manifest the presence of God and enact the salvation of Christ. The image of God’s architecture “meeting” with sin in the heart indicates a melding of the two, and suggests that this is not just building, but rebuilding what sin had damaged. God is “struggling with a peevish heart, / Which sometimes crosseth thee, thou sometimes it: / Great God doth fight, he doth submit. / All Solomons sea of brasse and world of stone / Is not so deare to thee as one good grone” (ll. 14-18). The “meeting” of God and sin leads

³¹. This is perhaps the explanation for the fact that, as Guibbory notes, “Sion” seems to “[jar] with much of the *Temple*” when read through an anti-ceremonial lens (59).

to a “struggle” between God and the hitherto impenitent heart, suggesting structural instability. Victory hinges on the heart’s “submission” – a dramatization of conversion in which God’s love conquers the effects of sin and pride. That love is demonstrated by the re-enactment of Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross within the heart. The struggle to rebuild is a series of doubled “crossings,” or altercations – one cross by God and one by the heart, which together make yet a larger “cross” within their struggle. This description of the struggle situates the cross as the focal point of Christ’s salvific death and resurrection. It also alludes to the cruciform shape of a church. This suggests that this holy struggle within the heart engenders the salvific power of Christ for the speaker, bringing redemption through struggle and leading to “one good grone,” the sign of repentance that is the mark of salvation for Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican alike. In doing so, the architecture of the church metaphor becomes the means by which the speaker represents the work of God.

3. Rebuilding the Poet’s Heart-Church

“Sion” sets the stage for a larger narrative that runs through multiple poems in *The Temple*, and that establishes the heart space as a church, the center of God’s presence and work. This is the premise on which the work of the speaker’s spiritual growth and poetic efficacy is based. Using this Laudian conception of the Church and its purposes, Herbert designates the speaker’s heart as a poetic space throughout several poems where he explicates the challenges to his poetry’s spiritual purpose and the process of redemption by which God redeems his poetry.

Despite his high view of poetry, in “Deniall” the speaker reveals that he is unable to create it effectively, and points to distance in his relationship with God as the culprit. Though not traditionally read as one of the church furniture or architecture poems, “Deniall’s” heart imagery

suggests that it continues the work done in “Sion,” and establishes the heart of the speaker in particular as a Temple-like space. As with “Sion,” in this poem the speaker establishes that God’s presence is key to his spiritual salvation, and that this presence should reside within the heart. However, despite what should be, the speaker cannot seem to make his poetry work:

When my devotions could not pierce
Thy silent eares;
Then was my heart broken, as was my verse:
My breast was full of fears
And disorder:

My bent thoughts, like a brittle bow,
Did flie asunder:
Each took his way; some would to pleasures go,
Some to the warres and thunder
Of alarms.

As good go anywhere, they say,
As to benumme
Both knees and heart, in crying night and day,
Com, com, my God, O com
But no hearing.

O that thou shouldst give dust a tongue
To crie to thee,
And then not heare it crying! all day long
My heart was in my knee,
But no hearing.

Therefore my soul lay out of sight,
Untun'd, unstrung:
My feeble spirit, unable to look right,
Like a nipt blossome, hung
Discontented

O cheer and tune my heartlesse breast,
Deferre no time;
That so thy favours granting my request,
They and my minde may chime,
And mend my ryme. (ll. 1-30)

The speaker refers to himself in the first person, using the lyric “I,” in this narrative of his heart’s breaking; his preoccupation with his poetic output, moreover, suggests that the speaker is a stand-in for the poet himself. His heart as a structure is in the process of demolition. The description of God as unable to hear the speaker, whose devotions “could not pierce” the divine ears, indicates that the speaker believes that God has abandoned him. That belief in a lack of divine presence is posed as the breaking of his heart and soul: God’s seeming silence leaves his heart “broken” (l. 3), and his “bent” and “brittle” thoughts seem on the verge of snapping. In fact, that frailty appears to destroy the heart completely, as the speaker is left with a “heartlesse breast,” suggesting that the structure itself no longer stands within the speaker. God’s silence, or apparent lack of presence, seems to ruin the very fabric of the heart.

The cause of this sense of abandonment is revealed to be the speaker’s sin. The speaker attempts to argue that God is the cause of his inefficacy, and he expresses frustration that God has “silent eares,” an adjectival use of “silent” that indicates the agency is with God, who has, in the spirit of the poem’s title, denied him a hearing. He claims that this refusal causes his heart “then” to be broken, implying causation, and that this is the source of his “fears And disorder.” Without God’s presence to direct them, he implies, his thoughts “flie farther” from the divine and toward earthly “pleasures” and “alarms.” But as the poem progresses, his language reveals that the cause of his incapacity to be heard is actually the reverse. In the third stanza, the speaker’s errant thoughts are shown to be the force directing him astray. The repeated lament that he gets “no hearing,” without an identifiable subject or object, poses the question – is it God who does not give a hearing, or is it the speaker who cannot or will not hear? The speaker’s exhortation to “As good go any where” locates the decision entirely within his own skeptical will. His thoughts persuade him not to go to God because to do so would be “as good” as going

“anywhere” else; in other words, it was his despair which led him to disconnect from God, and not the other way around. Indeed, according to the tenets of predestination, that despair is the inevitable sign of sin; according to the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1563) for persons “lacking the spirit of Christ,” “the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living.”³²

It would seem, then, that the agent directing the speaker away from God’s ears is, in fact, himself, and his inability to reach out to God is a broader symptom of his inherent sinfulness. The statement that God gives “dust a tongue” and then refuses to hear it on the one hand recalls the story in Genesis of God forming Adam out of the dust, and suggests that the speaker blames God for faulty design; the phrasing of “and then not heare it crying” almost blasphemously implies that God might not have the capacity to hear his own creation. But the speaker undercuts his own argument through double meanings that convey his own sense of guilt: his description of man as “dust” also recalls the Biblical description of death, the consequence of sin, as a returning of “dust to dust,” the triumph of death over man, which suggests that sin plays a role in this debacle rather than God. The “therefore” of the following stanza effectively links the two together, demonstrating how his sinfulness leaves him out of sync: “*Therefore* my soul lay out of sight, / Untun’d, unstrung: / My feeble spirit, unable to look right” (ll. 25-26). Because he cannot hear God, he is “out of sight” and “unable to look right”: the first clause being a statement on his hiddenness from God in sin, the second suggesting that this results in his inability to “look,” both as an action indicating his ability to see God “right” and also as a state of “look[ing] right,” or being in a right state.

³². “17. Of Predestination and Election,” quoted in *Religion and Society in Early Modern England*, ed. David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 64. This Article is specifically in reference to the pain of damnation in a predestinarian schema, in which case the sinner has no hope because God has not predestined them to salvation. However, the description of the pain of sin’s isolation can be applied more generally in the poem to the period before the sinner’s conversion and salvation.

This sinful detachment from God causes poetic incoherence. The disarray of his soul is reflected in the disorder of his verse when he claims that “my devotions could not pierce / Thy silent eares; / Then was my heart broken, as was my verse:/ My breast was full of fears / And disorder” (ll. 1-5). As the heart of the “Verser” breaks, so does his verse. The stanza is rhythmically and metrically inconsistent: “pierce” and “verse” are true rhymes only on occasion, as the middle of “pierce” could be pronounced either with an open or a closed vowel sound,³³ and the four-syllable final line is at variance with the rest of the lines above it. This suggests that his poetry does not work because his heart, like the lyre, the symbol of poetry, is “untun’d, unstrung” and disconnected.

The sin that cuts the speaker off from God therefore both crumbles his heart and also destroys his capacity to create poetry. But that which provided the language of destruction also provides the pattern of redemption, and the destruction is shown to be necessary for further edification. As we shall see in the next few poems, Herbert also draws on the imagery of church architecture to show that despite the poet’s spiritual and poetic brokenness, God can, through grace, save and reshape his heart.

In “The Temper,” the speaker allows for the work of rebuilding by reframing the issue of God’s presence as a spatial problem, or a matter of “fitness” of the heart’s space to hold the presence of God. The opening stanza again makes it clear that the poet’s sinfulness poses problems for his poetic efficacy: “How should I praise thee, Lord! how should my rymes / Gladly engrave thy love in steel, / If what my soul doth feel sometimes, / My soul might ever feel!” (ll. 1-4). The “How” introduces the inadequate condition of the speaker and its effect on his poetry, as he cannot praise God and build his poem “If what my soul doth feel” for God

³³. According to the *OED*, “In the early modern English period the quality of the vowel varies between the reflexes of Middle English open and close *ē*, and variants with a short vowel are also found” (“Pierce”).

reaches devotion only “sometimes.” This lack of God’s presence is figured by the relative perspective from which the poet can observe the work of God in creation: “Although there were some fourtie heav’ns, or more, / Sometimes I peere above them all; / Sometimes I hardly reach a score, / Sometimes to hell I fall” (ll. 5-8). The ability to oversee “fourtie heav’ns” represents full communion with God, while seeing the world from the level of “hell,” a mark of sinfulness and death, represents the consequences of being cut off from God as an inability to perceive his works. In this descriptive framework, sinfulness breaks the heart-space because its shortening effect makes the heart, in the words of Terry Sherwood, “unfit” to encompass the space of God’s presence.³⁴ The speaker asks God “Wilt thou meet arms with man, that thou dost stretch / A crumme of dust from heav’n to hell? / Will great God measure with a wretch? / Shall he thy stature spell?” (ll. 13-16) The “crumme of dust,” which hearkens back to the speaker’s description of himself as “Dust” with a useless tongue in “Deniall,” is shown to be an unfit unit of measurement in this spatial universe, so that his sinful inadequacy is too small to “meet arms” with God. His question whether God will “measure with a wretch” or “thy stature spell” of God’s presence refers to the rules of engagement in a duel, indicating antagonism between man and God. But it also references the act of assessment or “measure[ing]” space or stature, which indicates that he does not have the capacity to rightfully grasp the greatness of God. Lastly, it is also a pun because poems have “measures” – in which God should not be able to “measure” or account for the space in which He exists with something with as small a “stature” as man, indicating that this insufficiency is also expressed poetically.

If sin makes him spatially small, then, he literally does not have the capacity to comprehend God. He begs God “O rack me not to such a vast extent; / Those distances belong to thee: / The world's too little for thy tent, / A grave too big for me” (ll. 9-12). He and God are

³⁴. *Prayerful Art*, 77.

incompatible in size and scope, and what stops him from feeling God's presence is his own smallness; the world of comprehension is “too little” to contain God but “too big” for him – an incompatibility. Even here, this sinful incompatibility leads to physical breaking: his plea to God not to “rack” him, to “such a vast extent” emphasizes this incompatibility, as the torture of the rack was meant literally to break the body by stretching it – should God attempt to stretch the speaker’s figural heart to fit the space of the heavens, it would obliterate him.

But “The Temper” provides a solution to the spatial incompatibility of sin with God: a construction and expansion of its capacity, in which sin would otherwise shrink. Specifically, the speaker’s request that God save and transform him is posed as an act of rebuilding that will allow him better to encompass God’s presence. This is seen in the title of the poem, “The Temper,” which refers to “tempering” of his constitution as an evening out of the spiritual instability of sin. It also alludes to the metallurgical process of “tempering,” or making metal both strong and elastic enough to withstand being used in architecture. The speaker asks God to “stretch or contract me,” as one would building materials. To “temper” the speaker in this way, God must specifically stretch the speaker into the shape of himself. The speaker pleads with God to “O let me, when thy roof my soul hath hid, / O let me roost and nestle there: / Then of a sinner thou art rid, / And I of hope and fear” (ll. 17-20). God must, through his grace, fit the speaker into the space where he resides, making him God-shaped. The speaker’s plea to “roost and nestle” under God’s roof alludes to Christ’s description of his impending crucifixion as similar to a hen who “gathereth her chickens under her wings” for protection, implying that the speaker embraces the salvation Christ offers.³⁵ This metaphysical image presents the paradox of God’s work of grace and salvation in the crucifixion and resurrection: just as he must fit himself into human form

³⁵ . Matthew 23:37.

through the Incarnation, so here Christ must re-make man in his own redeemed image. By “hid[ing]” man’s soul under his own roof, he “stretch[es] and contract[s]” man to fit that space and inhabit his presence.

When the speaker is rebuilt so as to hold God’s presence, he can in turn build better poetry. When he asks God to “stretch or contract me thy poore debter,” he calls the act “a tuning of my breast, / To make the musick better” (ll. 22-24). The line recalls his plea in “Deniall” that God would “tune his heartless breast,” as one would tune an instrument. This suggests that now with a rebuilt heart, his breast can be “tun[ed]” and produce better poetry. As he says in the first stanza, he wants his rhymes to “Gladly engrave thy love in steel, / If what my soul doth feel sometimes, / My soul might ever feel!” (ll. 2-4) His rhymes “engrave” God’s love in metaphorical “steel” – a reference to the “engraving” of words on the page by a steel printing press, which suggests a fuller manifestation of God through poetry.³⁶

This line about “engrav[ing] thy love in steel” also has architectural overtones, and points to a larger project of the text wherein God tempers, or fixes what is broken in the poet’s heart and rhyme, by ironically having him shaped by his own poetic failures. For the engraving on steel alludes not only to the act of printing, but also the creation of grave markers in church parishes, such as those featured in “Church-monuments.” Though not specifically addressed to himself or his sins, the speaker’s reflections in this poem provide an explanation for how poetic failure itself is the means by which redemption occurs.³⁷

Though the grave marker holds out the promise of eternal life in itself, Herbert quickly shows that this hope is false. Monuments ostensibly ensure that the dead will be remembered,

³⁶. “Engravings” here could also refer specifically to emblems, which Herbert undoubtedly used as inspiration. See Martin Elsky, “George Herbert’s Pattern Poems and the Materiality of Language,” *ELH* 50:2 (1983), 245-260.

³⁷. See its relationship to Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* in Chapter 1.

but the ravages of time ironically make the erasing effects of death – which, according to Scripture, is the result of sin (Romans 6:23) – materially legible in the monuments’ “Ieat,” and “Marble.” In the depiction of the monument, the speaker reifies poetic failure as a material metaphor:

While that my soul repairs to her devotion,
 Here I intombe my flesh, that it betimes
 May take acquaintance of this heap of dust;
 To which the blast of deaths incessant motion,
 Fed with the exhalation of our crimes,
 Drives all at last. Therefore I gladly trust

My bodie to this school, that it may learn
 To spell his elements, and finde his birth
 Written in dustie heraldrie and lines;
 Which dissolution sure doth best discern,
 Comparing dust with dust, and earth with earth.
 These laugh at Ieat, and Marble put for signes,

To sever the good fellowship of dust,
 And spoil the meeting. What shall point out them,
 When they shall bow, and kneel, and fall down flat
 To kisse those heaps, which now they have in trust?
 Deare flesh, while I do pray, learn here thy stemme
 And true descent; that when thou shalt grow fat,

And wanton in thy cravings, thou mayst know,
 That flesh is but the glasse, which holds the dust
 That measures all our time; which also shall
 Be crumbled into dust. Mark here below
 How tame these ashes are, how free from lust,
 That thou mayst fit thy self against thy fall. (ll. 1-24)

This poem, as a representation of a grave marker in the imagined church space, observes the process of dissolution that a sinful heart undergoes in real time. According to Stanley Fish, in “Church Monuments” “the dissolution of sentences and stanzas and of the objects within them produces a corresponding dissolution, or falling away of, the perceptual framework a reader

brings with him,” and so is a sign of ego-dissolution.³⁸ The poetry itself enacts that failure syntactically: each stanza ends and begins with one half of an enjambed line, which creates the impression of sentences being simultaneously formed and torn down. In this, the poetry reflects back the state of the heart. In each stanza, the ending punctuation is buried in a middle line, as if the verses would run forever without closure or solution, a poetic expression of spiritual imperfection.

But for Herbert, the representation of poetic and spiritual failure in this poem actually functions as a reflection of the process from which the speaker might find meaning. The speaker depicts a process of introspection in which the soul “repairs to her devotion,” or attempts to restore herself after sin ruins her holiness. The best way to do that is to “intombe” itself “here” in the poetic grave that reflects poetic failure. In writing it, the speaker “betimes / May take acquaintance” of his impending death, the result of his “crimes.” In other words, the poem’s intention is to force him to introspection through the representation of its own insufficiency as poetry. This representation wants to teach the subject to think on his own inevitable dissolution. The poem gives the subject the opportunity to “trust My bodie to this school, that it may learn / To spell his elements” – both to talk about death, and also to “spell” or illustrate it in poetry for others.

Ironically, this poetic reflection then wants him to “finde his birth / Written in dustie heraldrie and lines,” or to find the way to *new*, or *re*-birth, in salvation through contrition. Through the poetic mimesis of the poem’s description of death, and its performance as a “monument” to the wages of sin, the poet can “compar[e] dust with dust, and earth with earth,” or use this representation of death to grasp its reality better. The poem as a mimetic picture of material monuments reminds the poet that in poetry, “These laugh at Ieat, and Marble put for

³⁸. *Self-Consuming*, 165.

signes,” or that poetry reminds the audience that real jet and marble will dissolve just like the bodies they entomb, and must be “signes” only. These “signes” specifically “sever the good fellowship of dust / And spoil the meeting,” a reminder that in death we are all equal in the “good fellowship of dust” that erases who we are, despite the monuments’ attempt to “sever” it in their promise to maintain the dead’s rank and status. But in failing to preserve the dead, they also thus act as “signes” of failure itself, forcing the subject to remember their impending oblivion. He learns that “Flesh is but the glasse, which holds the dust / That measures all our time” – a measurement of mortal time, but also of poetic time in meter and verse. Flesh holds the “dust” – which was, in “Deniall,” the voiceless poet himself – that ‘measures all our time’ or writes poetry, which “also shall be crumbled into dust” because of the fallibility of time and the poet’s death.

This reflection starts the process of redemption and rebuilding, because it is the moment in which God calls the poet to repent and turn from his sins. This poetic reflection on death is posed as an “intombe[ment],” where he inhabits the dust of his future death, acknowledging his fallibility. In becoming one with the poem, he is shaped by it through God’s grace,³⁹ since in doing so he tells himself that he “mayst fit thy self against thy fall” or prepare himself for death by acknowledging that he is only dust. This is an act of humility and submission, a form of repentance that leads to salvation. But ‘fit’ here also means to “fit thyself” as the act is described in “The Temper,” in which it means that he is fit into the space of God’s presence better. So in burying himself in the poem and its representation of failure, he can “mark” his repentance of that failure through the poetry. To “mark” it means that he learns about death and it also “marks”

³⁹. Though it is the speaker’s repentance, the theology of the Church of England suggests that his repentance is predestined and irresistible, since man “cannot turn and prepare himself” to “calling upon God” without “the grace of God by Christ” dictating it (“10. “Of Free Will,” in *Religion and Society*, 62). Thus though the poems pose these actions of repentance, here and elsewhere, as the speaker’s, theologically their agency belongs to God.

his learning in the sense of recording it by engraving it in poetry as a monument to repentance. In writing he entombs himself in the poem's meaning, and reclaims the poetry's use as it allows God to "fit" him better within his presence.

Thus, in poems about the destruction of the poet's heart, where the church imagery of the text appears to collapse, the connection between poem and heart is made clear. In the materiality of the church's grave, that destruction is shown to be the catalyst for transformation. We then see the effect of the poet's repentance in poems where God's subsequent forgiveness and sanctification is portrayed as the rebuilding of a church in the poet's heart.

In "Church-Lock and Key," for instance, the speaker's penitence allows Christ's power to open up an otherwise closed heart, and make it perform the function of the Temple: to be the meeting place of God and Man. Whereas in "Deniall" the speaker cast blame upon God for his inability to hear, in this poem he acknowledges that:

I know it is my sinne, which locks thine eares,
And bindes thy hands,
 Out-crying my requests, drowning my tears;
 Or else the chilnesse of my faint demands.

But as cold hands are angrie with the fire,
And mend it still;
 So I do lay the want of my desire,
 Not on my sinnes, or coldnesse, but thy will.

Yet heare, O God, onely for his blouds sake
Which pleads for me:
 For though sinnes plead too, yet like stones they make
 His blouds sweet current much more loud to be.
 (ll. 1-12)

This poem, like "Deniall," poses sin as a barrier to the presence of God. The speaker acknowledges that it is "my sinne" that hinders him from acknowledging God's presence by "out-crying" his own request for salvation. The last line of the first stanza, "or else the Chillnesse

of my faint demands” is a clause without a clear precedent: it is a parallel action to “my sinne,” suggesting it is either his sin *or* his faint demands, that seems to lock God's ears and outcry his own requests; or the demands, like God's ears, seem to be locked out from God by the speaker's sin which “Out-cry” his requests, drowning them out. Given that the speaker presents the clauses to us in “either/or” fashion, “the chillnesse of my faint demands” is parallel to “thine ears,” and the demands are parallel with the space of the figural church of the poem. This sin is posed as “locking” God’s ears and presence out of his heart-church: the title of the poem, the “Church-lock and key,” suggests God's righteousness is the lock that keeps God from hearing and joining him. So though God’s presence is, indeed, everywhere, and he is omnipresent in the poet’s heart, sin’s destructiveness makes the poet feel as if God’s ears are “locked” from hearing him. But because the speaker acknowledges his guilt, he can then do what he could not do in “Deniall”: ask for forgiveness. When he “lay[s] the want of his desire” on the altar of God's will, it means two things: the things he prays for, that he “wants” and “desires,” but also his own acknowledgement of “want” or lack of desire, for God. He is in effect asking God to redeem his sin of ambivalence.

In this state of repentance, Christ covers the speaker’s sins through his sacrifice on the cross – and act that fulfills the requirements necessary to make the heart habitable for God. This illustrates the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, in which Christ's death bestows righteousness upon sinful man. This is described as a means of fixing the problem of God’s seeming deafness: Christ’s blood “pleads for me,” reaching God’s ears in the last stanza because it is made “more loud to be” than “sinne’s” pleading. Christ’s forgiveness of sins, in other words, is the “key” that unlocks the door of the speaker’s heart so that he can sense God’s hearing. This act of substitution is represented as an inhabiting of the materials of the heart, indicating a return

of God's presence to the space of the heart-church, since his sin acts "like stones" to make the "sweet current" of Christ's blood "more loud to be." The image of the speaker's heart-stones making Christ's blood's "sweet current" louder implies a cavernousness in his heart's space, with the blood's "current" echoing as it traverses the stones. But like the floor of the church, the stonework is also Christ's body itself, whose blood dwells within it and calls out to God on the speaker's behalf. In this they are like the "lively stones," or the congregants, that make up the Body of Christ as the spiritual church (1 Peter 2:5). Through the paradox of grace, the stones, though sinful, are inhabited by God's presence, which bestows salvation through grace on the speaker despite the locked door.

While the habitation of Christ in the heart-church of "Church-Lock and Key" demonstrates how repentance re-establishes the heart as the meeting place of God and man, "JESU" gives us the "why." This is because it demonstrates that this whole process of redemption – the breaking, the rebuilding, the redeeming, and the re-inhabiting of the speaker's heart – is meant to engender the true purpose of both the heart and the church: the ability to reshape the structure in God's image, and to prepare it to do God's work in the world.

Traditionally, "Jesu" is read as a poetic emblem, based on the popular printed woodcuts of contemporary devotional books.⁴⁰ But there is space enough in the visual to imply that it is also describing a church building:

JESU is in my heart, his sacred name
Is deeply carved there: but th'other week
A great affliction broke the little frame,
Ev'n all to pieces; which I went to seek:
And first I found the corner, where was *J*,
After, where *E S*, and next where *U* was graved.
When I had got these parcels, instantly
I sat me down to spell them, and perceived

⁴⁰. Wilcox, 402.

That to my broken heart he was *I ease you*,
 And to my whole is *J E S U*. (ll. 1-10)

The image of Jesus' name "carved" into the heart suggests the presence of material like wood or stone that would often, in parish churches, have Christological words or verses carved into them. His description of the heart as a "little frame" sounds similar to the speaker's description of the heart-Temple as a "frame and fabrick" in "Sion." Within that space, he finds a "corner," which implies a room and the conjoining of walls that create it. In fact, reading "corner" in this stanza as a reference to a room makes sense of an otherwise illogical aspect of this verse as an emblem: Daniel Cramer's 1617 "Jesu" emblem, to which some have speculated this poem refers, is notable in its lack of any kind of corner in the visual -- the heart itself is quite rounded, and is within a circular frame.⁴¹ Because of this, there are no corners in the emblem at all. In this case, the image presented in the poem is of a small piece of the "corner" of the room, engraved as it is with Christ's name in its very material, which is "found" after being broken away from the rest of the room.

The speaker demonstrates that as God rebuilds, he re-orders the raw materials of the broken heart to make it look like Christ. God hides the heart within his Grace, as he did when fitting the speaker under his roof in "Deniall," and reshapes it in imitation of himself. In the breaking of his heart, the speaker's very self gets elided with the material breakdown of the heart. The description of the piece of the carving "where *U* was graved" makes a pun out of the act of engraving that had earlier tied his heart and his poetry together -- not only is it an etching, it depicts "*U*," the speaker, as an "[en]graved," or entombed, body, as he is in "Church Monuments." It thus depicts the death of the speaker, illustrating the theological notion that in order to accept salvation, one must "be dead indeed unto sin" (Romans 6:11-14). In the next

⁴¹ . *Rosicrucian Emblems of Daniel Cramer*, trans. Fiona Tait. (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1991), 50. See Figure A.

verse, however, the speaker's self is alive and elided with Christ – the “J,” because of the lack of an actual “J” in Latin, is also an “I,” which has only the weakest homophonic capacity to half-rhyme with “instantly” two lines down, suggesting that the letter is not fully J but not fully I either. In this, we see the “I” of the speaker eliding with the “J” of Jesus, putting into effect St. Paul's declaration that “my life is hid in Christ.”⁴² To live with Christ, then, the speaker must die to self and be “engraved” through “affliction” and brokenness.

This identification with Christ is the means by which the speaker's heart can also be filled with Christ's presence. The resolution of his heart's destruction is a rebuilding through the grace of Christ as each broken letter is re-configured to read “I-EASE-YOU.” This is at once a statement about the comfort of salvation, and also a revelation about what that accomplishes. For in easing his brokenness through grace, Christ also becomes Jesu “to my whole,” suggesting that in having his name reconfigured in the rebuilding, Jesus is now able to inhabit the speaker's whole heart. The dashes suggest that the letters are spaced out as they are put back together, so that as Christ engraves himself and his love on the speaker's heart, the heart expands in space. Christ's presence in the materiality of his heart enlarges it, building it up and shaping it in the image of his name -- and of himself. This re-shaping of the heart in Christ's image hearkens back to the notion put forth by Lancelot Andrewes that the church is built in as a representation of Christ's body, in order to allow the congregants inside to sense Christ's presence. By depicting Christ physically re-constructing the speaker's heart in his image in this poem, Herbert demonstrates that Christ can turn his heart into a Temple-like space that, through brokenness and rebuilding, is able not just to hold, but also to reflect the presence of Christ.

4. Reifying the Heart-Church: Inviting the Reader In

⁴². See also Herbert's “Colossians 3:3” (Wilcox, 303).

My last section showed how Herbert's conception of God's salvation and grace works to rebuild his heart in the shape of a church to hold God's saving presence. But as he perpetually reminds us, the transformation of the speaker's sinful heart into a church space through grace also allows him then to restore his poetry. The actual means by which this restoration is accomplished resides in the poetry's effect on the audience.

Specifically, the poetry acts as a reflection of his heart that creates a poetic space in which God's presence can become accessible to his readers as well. We see this first in "The Altar," in which the speaker's heart becomes reified as a poetic space in the text:

A broken A L T A R, Lord, thy servant reares,
 Made of a heart and cemented with teares;
 Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;
 No workmans tool hath touch'd the same.
 A H E A R T alone
 Is such a stone,
 As nothing but
 Thy pow'r doth cut.
 Wherefore each part
 Of my hard heart
 Meets in this frame,
 To praise thy name.
 That if I chance to hold my peace,
 These stones to praise thee may not cease.
 O let thy blessed S A C R I F I C E be mine,
 And sanctifie this A L T A R to be thine.
 (ll. 1-16)

The echoes of poems already discussed indicate that this Altar shares the imaginative space of the speaker's figurative heart-church: he makes reference to the "frame" in which the "parts" of his heart meet and connect, which points to the "frame" of the church building as it appears in "Deniall" and "Jesu." The altar of the poem is made of a heart cemented with tears, indicating repentance, and is made of the brokenness inherent in the speaker's experience of sin and forgiveness. It is also "cut" by God's power, shaped into its present form by God's will, tying it to

the description of God's "Architecture," or power made manifest, that forms the frame of the heart-church in "Sion." More importantly, its place early in the volume -- directly after the "Church Porch" but before the rest of the furniture poems -- creates an optical illusion of having come through the doorway and looked square in the middle of the church of the text.⁴³ If his heart is the church, the poem as an "Altar" suggests it is the focal point of that figurative church, and the signifier of its purpose.

But the "Altar" is also specifically a poetic structure, meant to represent poetry itself. It presents as a "shape poem," in which the verses are arranged to create the outline of an Altar as the lines created by the halving or doubling of each progressive verse. Martin Elsky argues that because Herbert was invested in Renaissance linguistic thought he shares in the "increased awareness during the Renaissance of the material basis of language in its visibility as written marks and its audibility as spoken sounds."⁴⁴ Specifically, "The Altar" functions as a pictogram in which the letters and words are physically built out of the poet's spoken utterance, because the Renaissance saw "letters as physically constructed objects."⁴⁵ In other words, the poem is a physical construction of the poet's speech -- and, more importantly, the thoughts and prayers of his heart.

The creation of the title through the stanza's verses makes the poem a stand-alone representation of the poet's heart, transforming the poetry into a kind of church space. The "Altar" is "made of" the parts of his heart, material that also suggests that it is being used, in its brokenness, to construct a separate edifice. Those "parts" seem to generate doubles of themselves as the poem progresses: the "heart" of stanza two, the substance of which the Altar is

⁴³. See Figure B.

⁴⁴. "Materiality," 247.

⁴⁵. Ibid.

made, then also becomes the “heart” stone of line 5, the beginning of the Altar's pillar as well as the “heart” from which the speaker's praise flows in poetry in line 8. Likewise, the “parts” of the heart in the first section, which are the substances “framed” by God to make his heart, again become the “parts” of the Altar “frame” in lines 9 and 11. The heart is, in line 5, described as a “stone” in its totality, but it then multiplies and becomes the plural “stones” of the Altar that praise God in line 14. The repetitions of these key parts of the building of the heart suggest that in this imaginative plane of the heart-church the substance of the heart then also becomes the Altar of the poem. In that doubling, “each part / Of my hard heart” creates the imaginative edifice of the poem on the page, enacting a similar engraving of God's work in the heart as described in “The Temper.” As the speaker's heart becomes the space of the church, it gets inscribed in the volume as a replica, and becomes a textual church.

In making the poem a replica of his heart-church, the speaker suggests that the presence of Christ fills his heart and his poetry. When the speaker asks Christ to “let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine / And sanctifie this ALTAR to be thine,” it is a claim that Christ inhabits the space of the Altar: the “blessed sacrifice” is the substitutionary work of the Crucifixion that grants salvation and, with it, right relationship with God. By asking that it “be mine,” the speaker simultaneously begs for grace to be his, and also transposes the subject and object, so that it is *his* “sacrifice” to Christ – in this case, the “Altar” itself, which represents his poetry as a form of worship that “praises” Christ. Doing so implores God to “sanctify this Altar,” or the poetry itself, to “be thine,” both an indication that Christ is the recipient of his praise and also a means of accepting Christ's “sanctification,” or holy presence, in his poetry. The interlocking recipients of the poem and the sacrifice as “mine” and “thine,” or the speaker and Christ, implies that the speaker is inhabited now by Christ's power. This makes him an effective channel of God's grace,

since “if I chance to hold my peace, / These stones to praise thee may not cease.” This couplet alludes to Christ's promise as he entered Jerusalem that if the crowd did not praise him, the very stones would rise up to do so (Luke 19:28). Since the “stones” here, though, are the parts of the speaker's heart which make up the Altar of the poem, the power of Christ's presence in the Altar compels the poem to speak his praises, and in doing so express the devotion which had previously eluded the speaker.

Herbert's conception of his poetry as a presence-filled church space also allows him to define how it should work. Specifically, he includes the readers in that conception, defining them as congregants whose act of reading is akin to the act of entering and partaking in the church space. In that act of reading his poetic church, the readers are invited to be shaped by the poet's own process of salvation, and imitate his turn from sin to repentance. This is an assertion that the act of reading the poem constitutes the means of transformation, which is most fully illustrated in the opening part of the volume, “The Church Porch,” which is addressed to his hypothetical readers before they embark upon the poetry. This poem, in keeping with its architectural namesake, should be the entryway into the space of the text, and its liminal placement, according to Anne Myers, “teaches the reader that [material and spiritual] categories are inseparable; one folds perpetually back into the other, and expanses of eternity are woven through the histories of daily life.”⁴⁶ As Myers points out, the porch of parish churches was the locus of much ritualized activity in the church, from distribution of alms to baptisms to marriage ceremonies, and so it constitutes the space in which the congregation most firmly signified their membership in the church.⁴⁷

⁴⁶. *Literature and Architecture in Early Modern England*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 108.

⁴⁷. *Ibid.*, 109.

In the opening segment, the speaker claims that his poetry has the power to shape their spiritual posture. Its first section is addressed to “Thou,” the “sweet youth,” an idealized reader who, as a character, stands in for the audience as the addressee of the poem. The speaker promises this youth that the following poetry can “Ryme thee to good,” and “find him, who a sermon flies” (ll. 1-3). This claim for edification is expressed as an invitation into the church space of the poet’s heart, as it is made manifest in the poetry and the reader’s act of reading. It seems, in this vein, to be a poem of preparation that sanctifies the reader for the experience of the poetry to follow. The “Perrirhanterium” alludes to Greek basins designed for ritual cleansing at the entrance of the Temple, a precursor to the baptismal font that would be found at the entrance to the English parish church in which parishioners might bless themselves.⁴⁸ This introductory poem, then, is posed as a ritual cleansing that prepares them for the work of meeting God in the poem.

However, the “Perrirhanterium” itself, as many scholars have noted, does not seem to work, because it is more symptomatic of the “sweet youth”’s frame of mind than of the poet’s.⁴⁹ It essentially acts as a sermon – the effects of which the poetry itself is meant to ameliorate for those who would otherwise “fly” from one – with its list of precepts, virtues, and behaviors. But these incongruities appear to be less a consequence of the poet’s faulty theology than of the youth’s. The “Church Porch” makes legible his faulty interpretation, since the youth, like the poet, is unable to hear or receive grace in his sinful state. For example, the second stanza, ostensibly a warning against lust should, according to the speaker’s claim, capture the youth’s –

⁴⁸. Anne Myers notes that “the baptismal font was usually placed just inside the church door, to complete a ceremony begun in the porch and to reflect the principle that baptism itself is a symbolic entry” (*Literature and Architecture*, 109). See Figure B for an example. See also Gerald Randall’s documentation of both fonts and porches in *Church Furnishings and Decoration in England and Wales*. (London: BT Batsford, 1980), 31-56.

⁴⁹. See Wilcox, 47-49 for an overview of critical takes.

and, therefore, the audience he represents – imagination. However, in reality, the stanza explains how and why that verse will have no effect on the audience: “Beware of lust; it doth pollute and foul / Whom God in Baptisme washt with his own blood” (ll. 7-8). A reader with lust in his heart (sin) will be “pollute and foul” despite the baptism of the text’s intentions. This is because “It blots thy lesson written in thy soul; / The holy lines cannot be understood” (ll. 9-10). If a reader is sinful, the act of reading cannot affect him or her, and the lessons will be “blotted” out and not “understood.” In other words, just as “Church-Lock and Key” does for the poet, so the “Perrirhanterium” reflects back to readers the extent to which they must recognize their own sinfulness.

This is because what is needed to get into the church of the poem is the same thing needed to get into the church of the poet’s heart: repentance. That repentance is also achieved by the readers’ ability to confront his own failings through their reflection in the poetry, made tangible in the poem of readerly entrance at the end of the “Church Porch.” The “Superliminare,” or the door lintel, provides the entrance to the volume, and also alludes to the “supraliminal” space between the physical and spiritual worlds that connects the earthly with the divine presence. Its opening is contingent on purity:

Thou, whom the former precepts have
 Sprinkled and taught, how to behave
 Thy self in church; approach and taste
 The churches mysticall repast

Avoid profanenesse; come not here:
 Nothing but holy, pure, and cleare,
 Or, that which groneth to be so,
 May at his perill further go. (ll. 1-8)

The first stanza shows that none can approach on their own: thou “whom the former precepts have / sprinkled and taught” can “approach and taste” the “mysticall repast,” which is the

Eucharist, or God's presence made figurative flesh and blood in bread and wine. But since the "sweet youth" in the "Perrirhanterium" did not achieve this holiness, he should be shut out: the poem also says to "come not here" if not "holy, pure, and cleare," denying entrance to sinful readers. But the poem, as Fish and others have pointed out, doubles back on itself: though the first stanza is a command to "approach," the second commands to "come not here," breaking down the previous precept. Though every line contains eight stresses, each switches to a distinct meter, which reads choppily, as if the lines were being broken into pieces. The second subject's command eradicates the former: to "Avoid Profanenesse, come not here" can be read either as a continuation of the theme of purity, or a warning to "come not here" if one wants to avoid "profanenesse." These contradictions are a result of the interruption of the one thing that might set sin right: repentance. After breaking down expectations, the "Or" ambivalently suggests the way forward: the "groneth to be so" – an act that, in poems such as "Deniall," and "The Temper," is always a sign of repentance. This is much like the speaker's own experience with the redemption of his poetic making: this poetic church space edifies readers not by direct didactic instruction, but by confronting them with their own brokenness in the brokenness of the poetry.

The readerly recognition of failure can, like the author's, lead to repentance, and grant access to Christ's redemptive power. This process is represented in "The Church-floore" as the readers' experience with the text creates redemption specifically through their brokenness.⁵⁰ Though most critics read "The Church-floore" as a generic poem about the Christian experience, its repetition of familiar themes and images suggest that it is yet another facet of the church space that is the text of *The Temple*:

Mark you the floore? that square & speckled stone,
Which looks so firm and strong,
Is Patience:

⁵⁰ See Dyck, 232; Lewalski, 203-204.

And th' other black and grave, wherewith each one
 Is checker'd all along,
 Humilitie :

The gentle rising, which on either hand
 Leads to the Quire above,
 Is Confidence :

But the sweet cement, which in one sure band
 Ties the whole frame, is Love
 And Charitie.

Hither sometimes Sinne steals, and stains
 The marbles neat and curious veins:
 But all is cleansed when the marble weeps.
 Sometimes Death, puffing at the doore,
 Blows all the dust about the floore:
 But while he thinks to spoil the room, he sweeps.
 Blest be the *Architect*, whose art
 Could build so strong in a weak heart. (ll. 1-20)

The floor is that of the poetic rendering of the speaker's heart-church: the reference to the "whole frame" of the church shows us that we are back in the space of the poetic heart of "Sion," "The Temper," "Jesu," and "The Altar." The stones of the church, like those of the heart's floor in "Church-lock and Key," evoke the effects of Christ's substitutionary death, as they are "tied" together with the cement of "Love," the divine impetus for salvation (John 3:16), and "Charity," the earthly reflection of divine love between men.⁵¹ In fact, both "love and "charity" are, in the original Greek, the same word, *agape*.⁵² This change in cement, from the "tears" of the speaker in "The Altar" to the "love" of Christ here, performs the process of salvation, as God changes repentance into justification through grace. They are, in consequence, filled with the redemptive power of Christ that opens the doors of the church for readers to experience: they have the

⁵¹. See Chapter 3 for the definition of charity as a Christian virtue.

⁵². This is particularly clear in 1 Corinthians 13, on the status of love earthly and divine in the early Church.

capacity to turn death into redemption through penitence. When, in the final stanza, the church floor is stained by sin, its response is to clean sin by “weeping,” the mark of penitence, and by subverting the attacks of death on “Dust,” or mortal man, into a mere “sweeping,” or cleansing of the effects of sin through eternal life.

The redemptive presence of these stones can, through the enactment of penitence and salvation, spiritually shape the readers. In an echo of the poet’s “marking” of death and sin in “Church Monuments,” the speaker invites the audience to “mark” the floor, which means to read, to mar, and to inscribe all at once. Readers bring their sin, with its capacity to “mark” the heart, or to cut or stain it, to the poem to be rectified. But “mark” also refers to the act of reading itself as a kind of “marking,” or comprehension, as with the famous exhortation in the Book of Common Prayer to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the Scriptures.⁵³ Lastly, to “mark” can mean to engrave or inscribe, or to trace the outline of, the shape of the church in the poem. The audience then, through reading, “marks” it with their comprehension, tracing its meaning in their understanding, and internalizing it. This also allows them to grasp the virtues represented in the poem through the contrition and forgiveness that Christ’s presence in the poem bestows. For the redemptive stones are also representations of virtues – patience, humility, and confidence in salvation – that are the marks of Christian transformation. By reading them, learning them, and tracing their shape in the poem, the audience can imitate those virtues, and be formed in their image. They thus experience the effects of Christian virtues as they are embedded in the structure of the text – particularly those virtues which had, in “The Church Porch,” sounded like mere moralistic sermonizing. The poem can accomplish what didactic sermonizing cannot – the redemption and transformation of its audience.

⁵³. *The Book of Common Prayer: 1559, The Elizabethan Prayer Book*, ed. John Booty. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 79.

It would seem, from the singular nature of the “youth” to whom the “Perrirhanterium” is addressed, that Herbert’s ideal reader is a solitary believer, seeking edification by himself. But the poet asserts that his poetry can increase the church by shaping readers to manifest the presence of Christ to others *as a community*. Herbert depicts this hope by describing the text-church as transforming readers into church-spaces themselves, in imitation of the text and the Christ-imitating speaker, and exhorting them in turn to share Christ’s presence with others.

In “Sepulchre,” the speaker explores how to grow the Church in the world when sin severs the connection between God and man: “O blessed bodie! Whither art thou thrown? / No lodging for thee, but a cold hard stone? / So many hearts on earth, and yet not one / Receive thee?” (ll. 1-4). The speaker postulates the sepulcher, or his “heart,” as a “lodging” for Christ. But this depiction refers to Christ in a particular form. The “bodie” primarily alludes to Christ in death, after the crucifixion, who had no tomb until Joseph of Arimathea lent him his stone-covered one (Luke 25:30). However, Christ’s body is also the corporal Church, the community of Christians in the world. For sinners, before their redemption, are described by Paul as having “hearts of stone,” which Christ transforms into hearts of flesh through salvation; the “cold hard stone” that lodges Christ is also the hearts of those that have not yet welcomed him in and received his grace. When the poem asks why there are “So many hearts on earth and yet not one / Receive thee?” it wants to know how the spirit of Christ could inhabit his Body, the Church, more fully by spreading into the hearts of all mankind.

The poem’s emphasis on the stonework of a sepulcher (a regular architectural feature in parish churches) indicates that its solution, in part, belongs to the church built within Herbert’s own poetry. The “cold hard stone” of both the grave and the human heart is also the church in the text. Later in the poem, the speaker claims that “onely these stones in quiet entertain thee” (l. 15)

– again recalling the stones in “The Altar” of the poet’s heart in verse, and to their connection to the stones at entrance of Jerusalem crying out in praise. The “stones” of this “Sepulchre,” then, are the meeting place of the stone grave, the hearts of the readers, the heart of the poet, and the space of the poem. In this stone space, the hearts of speaker and audience are unified, and they speak together as one about the process of poetry: “Sure there is room within our hearts good store; / For they can lodge transgressions by the score: / Thousands of toys dwell there, yet out of doore / They leave thee” (ll. 5-8). When the speaker switches from addressing Christ to addressing himself, the speaker is revealed to be “our,” a plural voice, in which the speaker and readers speak as one, as the conjoined agents of the poem’s narrative. In that space, there is “room” made through the poetry to hold Christ, even if at present there are too many “toyes” of sin and decadence to allow Christ truly to dwell there. The “out of door / they leave thee” phrase echoes the images at the heart of “Church-Lock and Key” and the “Superliminare,” and suggests that once the readers have joined the space of the speaker’s heart-church-text, they must bring yet others within that space as well.

Key to this endeavor are the stones of the church text. For the stones, in holding Christ’s body, hold his resurrection and salvation as well. The second to last stanza alludes to the work of Christ in overturning the law with grace: “And as of old, the Law by heav’nly art / Was writ in stone; so thou, which also art / The letter of the word, find’st no fit heart / To hold thee” (ll. 17-20). Christ is, in the Gospels, the “Word [made] flesh” (John 1:14) who was “not come to destroy, but to fulfill” the law (Matthew 5:17), granting righteousness through his substitutionary death to those who would otherwise be lost. In this, Christ, by fulfilling the Law, is the “living stone” upon which the Law as the Word of God is made legible to man. So the extent to which this sepulcher is “written on” by Christ’s presence also indicates that the poetry, as a space for

his presence, inscribes the love of Christ legibly for the readers. And that love creates transformation: within the tomb, the speaker notes, “Where our hard hearts have took up stones to brain thee, / And missing this, most falsly did arraign thee; / Onely these stones in quiet entertain thee, / And order” (ll. 12-16). These “stones in quiet entertain thee” reminds us of the living stones of the text in “The Altar” that, like those of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, rise up to sing Christ’s praises. They “entertain” Christ through praise that cancels out the “hard hearts” which otherwise would “brain” and “arraign” Christ, transforming them into living stones like themselves. They do this through “order,” which hangs ambiguously in the last line, and means to “entertain in an orderly fashion,” as a complementary virtue to “quiet.” This alludes as well to the ordering of meter and rhyme that makes up poetry. That “order” is such that the poem embodies the powers of resurrection and redemption in its very lines and linguistic construction: its odd double-stanza structure with end-rhyming lines are marked by opposites coming together to cancel each other out from stanza to stanza, with receive/leave, murder/order, hold thee/withhold thee. This performs the very nature of resurrection as the rising of life from death, as the “order” of poetry is what creates the praise of Christ effectively. And that, in turn, allows the poetry to “order,” as a verb – or more specifically, to *re-order*, the heart of its readers so that they might accept Christ. In this sense, it creates “room in our hearts good store” where it had otherwise been occupied with sin, making it “fit” for his presence, shaping the readers around the image of the church in the poem.

In experiencing this transformation, the readers become a reflection or imitation of the poem, and of Christ in it, multiplying that presence in themselves. Stanley Fish says that this poem performs the realization that Christ is already in the heart despite the reader’s state, since “the active force in this situation, as in every other, is not the heart but Christ ... In a world

where Christ occupies every position and initiates every action, ambiguity – of place, of person, of agency – is the true literalism. His word is all.”⁵⁴ In other words, for Fish the poem is about the dissolution of the reader into a state of ambiguous meaning that is lost in the totality of Christ. But the poem is all about doubling, multiplying, creating *more* rather than less, and building up rather than dissolving. In admissions that seem to indicate failure, the speaker reveals hidden growth: “But that which shews them large, shews them unfit. / What ever sinne did this pure rock commit, / Which holds thee now? Who hath indited it / Of murder?” (ll. 9-12). The second couplet moves Christ’s presence from without, where it has not entered the “unfit” space, to within, as the poem “holds Thee now.” The “Which” that starts this line seems ambiguous – it is both a clause that describes the “rock” of the heart, as well as a question as to “which” rock “holds thee now.” In this space of doubled meaning, the referent of the “pure rock” switches from Christ to its readers’ hearts. In doing so, Christ fills those hearts and, with his grace, covers them and makes them pure. Once it they are filled with Christ, the hearts seem absolved of their sinfulness: the speaker asks “Who hath indicted it / Of murder?” an abrupt, literally mid-line turn from condemnation to declaration of innocence, which suggests that Christ’s presence has granted forgiveness and wiped away their sins.⁵⁵

In making this claim, “Sepulchre” provides perhaps the strongest statement of belief in the transformative powers of Christ-infused poetry, for it suggests that not only can poetry shape readers, but that in doing so, it shapes the very Church on earth itself. The audience, infused with Christ through poetry, is sent along a path of action marked by perpetual building, tearing down, and rebuilding that would invite others into the presence of Christ as well. For the poem acknowledges that sanctification after salvation is a process, as holy and profane are still at war

⁵⁴. *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, 172.

⁵⁵. See John 8:10; Romans 8:34.

in human hearts before the Second Coming: “Yet do we still persist as we began, / And so should perish, but that nothing can, / Though it be cold, hard, foul, from loving man / Withhold thee” (ll. 21-24). In this last stanza, the poet returns to the question of how poetry – as the meeting place of the poet and his community of readers – might reach out from beyond their poetic fellowship and bring more sinners into the Body of Christ. The exceptional “Yet” suggests that though those outside the text have not yet experienced Christ in the text, but that it is the task of the readers to “still persist as we began” in bringing them in; the adverbial “still” indicates a perpetual state of persisting, an ongoing task that poetry starts. That process includes perpetual perishing for perpetual resurrection, signaled by a dizzyingly quick succession of enjambed, ambiguous clauses. The line that begins “And so should perish, but that nothing can” both refers back to the first line as a description of what would happen should poetry not continue to persist in its work, and also points the way forward, as those who would create life “should perish” in order to vouchsafe it.

Through this work, the readers manifest Christ’s love to the world, and allow the poem to continue its outreach through their imitation of it and of Christ. In “perishing” through the poetry, readers ensure that others will thrive: the clause “but that nothing can” both anticipates the next line and also acts in the manner of a “so that,” or a promise that should the readers and speaker perish, “nothing” else can because the poetry will persist, and they can spread salvation to others. The next line to which the clause is tied reveals the result of that salvation, which is the bringing of others into the presence of Christ: “nothing can, / Though it be cold, hard, foul, from loving man / Withhold thee.” In this allusion to Romans 8, when Paul promises that “nothing can separate us from the love of God,” the “cold, hard, foul” nature of sin cannot “withhold” God’s love for his creation. The readers first held Christ in their heart for others, because “loving man”

can mean either that nothing can hold Christ back from “loving” man in the adverbial sense, or that nothing can hold “loving man” in the adjectival sense back from “withholding,” or holding within himself, the presence of Christ in a way that forbids others from encountering it. In this, Herbert makes a truly astonishing, almost blasphemously confident assertion about poetry – that it is essential to the work of the Church in the world, as a place where Christ might reach through both poets and readers to save sinners. Thus in reading, being broken, and repenting through poetry, readers can create in their own heart a space to be filled with God’s presence to share with others.

5. Conclusion

Herbert's high hopes for poetic edification and rebuilding through communal reading are on display not just in his poetry, but in its publication. For Herbert died tragically young of consumption, only three years into his ministry, just shy of his fortieth birthday. The legacy of his ministry is encapsulated by both the renovations of Bemerton, his pastoral guide *A Priest to His Temple*, and the text of the *Temple* itself. But the last of these exists for us only because of the work of an ecclesiastical community of his readers: the Ferrars of Little Gidding, a family of divines and religious community with whom he was friends. Walton tell us that he left the book to the Ferrars, saying it should be published “if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor Soul.”⁵⁶ If not, Ferrar was instructed to burn it. It thus stood the possibility of being consumed, destroyed, and forgotten out of all poetic memory. But the Ferrars, who were famous for their textual amalgamations of Biblical narratives, saved the manuscript, copied it out, and literally re-configured the text into a publishable manuscript, and oversaw its publication. Given that its first impression purportedly sold twenty thousand copies,

⁵⁶. Walton, *Life*, 311.

it seems to have reached many.⁵⁷ Thus they enacted that which Herbert had espoused: that when one is broken, and cannot praise God, the community of readers can take part in the building of the poetry and the furtherance of the Church through it.

⁵⁷. Ibid.

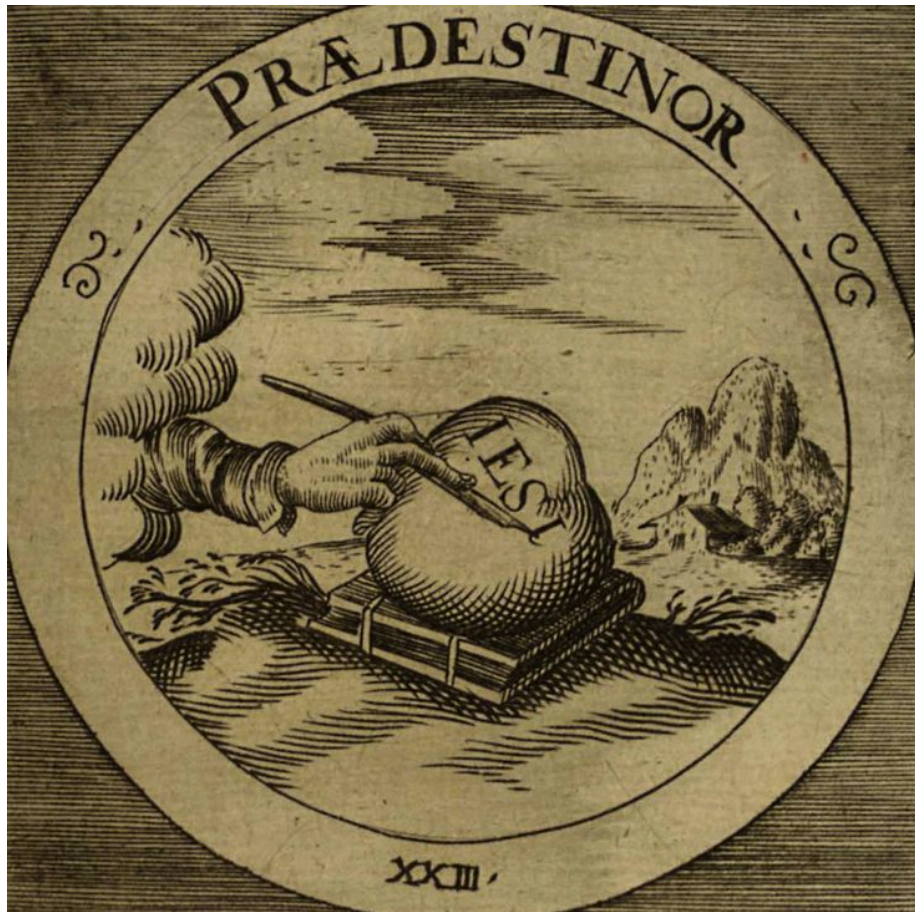


Figure A: *Rosicrucian Emblems of Daniel Cramer*, trans. Fiona Tait. (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 991), 50.

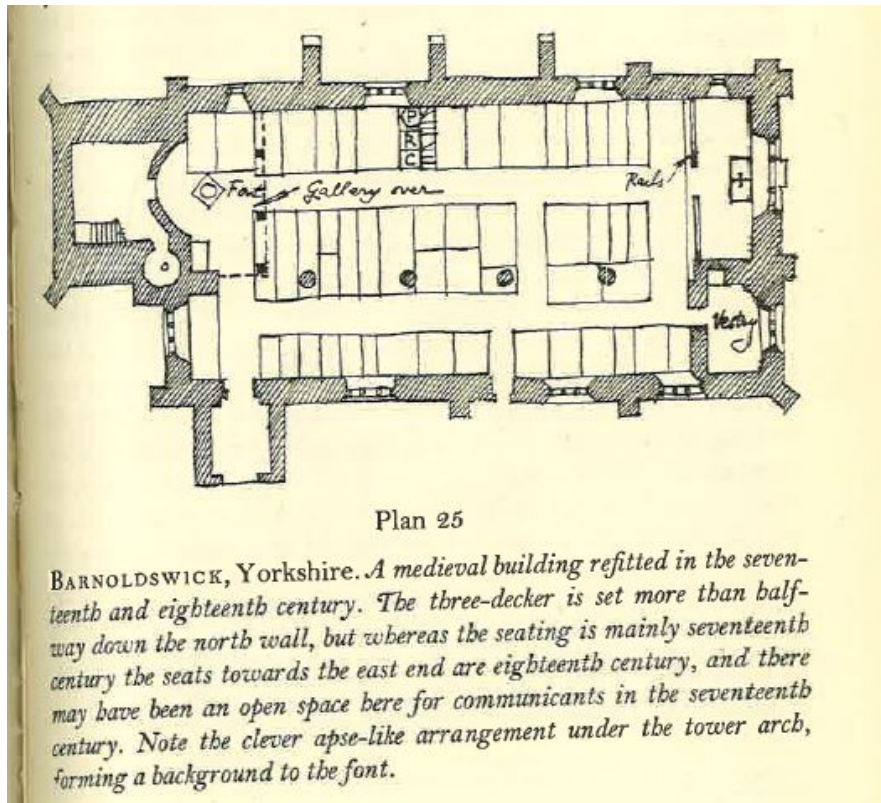


Figure B: example of parish church building layout; though there are variations, basic layout remains same. Note the direct line of sight from the Church Porch/Fountain on the left-hand side of the image down the gallery to the rails and Altar. From Addleshaw, p. 95.

EPILOGUE

I want to end with a brief explanation of the questions that motivated me to write this dissertation. Architectural motifs in literature, perhaps because they call for reflections about literary structure and method, seem to prompt similar reflections in literary critics. Philip Schwyzer, for example, appeals to the connections between archeology and literary criticism as evidence for their shared cultural work, which he attributes to Freud's initial use of archeological metaphors to talk about psychoanalysis, where the connection between the excavation of artifacts and the establishment of social meaning manifests “in any approach that purports to reveal hidden structures that lie beneath the surface of the text.”¹ For Schwyzer, the two fields' mutual compatibility supports the validity of his approach – he can “focus on anxieties” in early modern poetry, even “to an extent [he] did not anticipate,” because in doing so, he does the same as an archaeologist in the parallel field of material culture.²

But perhaps this “focus on anxieties” says more about our moment in disciplinary history than it does about early modern poetry. Surely, fears about loss existed in the early modern period, as Schwyzer's readings demonstrate, but what do we make of our collective critical choice to *focus* on that? Since Foucault, historicist work in literary criticism has had to reckon with the extent to which “history [as a discipline] is one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked.”³ While I want to make no implications about any other scholar's personal motivations but my own, clearly our choice of

¹. *Archaeologies*, 7. Sigmund Freud, “The Aetiology of Hysteria,” (1896) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1962), 192ff. See also Cathy Gere, who argues that archaeological metaphors arose out of natural science interest in 17th century, particularly through strategies of reading Scripture inscribed in the natural world. (“Inscribing Nature: Archaeological Metaphors and the Foundation of New Sciences,” *Public Archaeology*, 2 (2000), 195-208.

². *Archaeologies*, 4.

³. *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1972), 7.

archive and historical impulse indicates a scholarly fixation worth examining. Eve Sedgwick, in her seminal critique of historical criticism that developed from the works of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, shows that this historical epistemology has, at its base, an anxious, paranoid impulse that attempts to satisfy fears by imitating them. This impulse acts as a “hermeneutics of suspicion” that neutralizes threat through demystification; finds solace in expressing anger at oppressive systemic violence; exposes “truth” so as to draw oneself out of harm's way; finds exactly what we want to find so as to eliminate the possibility of unpleasant surprise.⁴

In light of this critique, when our post-New Historicist focus on ruins and anxiety is contextualized within our contemporary moment in the academy, the search for instantiations of mourning and historical loss that define present identity seems only too sensible. Growing economic problems are putting unprecedented pressures on the structure of scholarship in the liberal arts; we are more and more pressured to produce within the framework of business models that see no justification of learning for its own sake, or for the humanistic methodologies that promote civic engagement and ethics over capital gain. This has led to a shrinking, casualized job market, burgeoning student debt, the loss and merging of programs in the humanities, and an increasingly hostile culture that sees our aims and us as dead weight. Is it any wonder, then, that we as humanists want to recollect and mourn a glorified vision of the past in the humanities by analyzing early modern texts that recollect and mourn a glorified vision of the past?

My project is, by no means, intended to challenge historicist approaches to early modern literature; as a historicist I am still, after all, practicing a hermeneutics of suspicion, although my

⁴. “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You,” *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 123-152. The term “hermeneutics of suspicion” is from Paul Ricoeur’s *Freud and Philosophy*. (Binghamton NY: Vail-Ballou Press, 1970).

subject is the processes of rebuilding out of ruins rather than the mourning of those ruins.⁵ But these larger social factors and contexts have very much informed my thinking during the writing of this project. As such, this project, to borrow Sedgwick's revised architectural metaphor, has a *reparative impulse*. Although Sedgwick's article itself is more theory than praxis, and she does not provide concrete means of implementing reparative readings, I would like to attempt to define such a praxis. I have, to the best of my ability and in light of our current challenges, positioned myself as a *reader* who is hopeful for reparation, and a disciplinary rebuilding, through these early modern poets.⁶ As a *writer*, in focusing on rebuilding, I hope to promote a readerly approach to the past that meets the negative affect of thinking about historical loss with the positive, ameliorative affect of thinking about possible gains from repairing it.

In her analysis of Melanie Klein's psychoanalytic theory, Sedgwick places paranoid reading in an “oscillatory” relationship with the “depressive position,” in which one can “only briefly” attain an “anxiety-mitigating achievement ... from which it is possible in turn to use one's own resources to assemble or 'repair' the murderous part-objects into something like a whole – though, I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*”; significantly, Klein and Sedgwick call this reparative process “*love*.”⁷ My project is, I would argue, a love letter to an academy on the brink of transformation.⁸ It is my desire, borne out of love for an

⁵. As Sedgwick herself points out, you cannot follow reparative paths without basing your work on “paranoiacally structured” historical work (129).

⁶. “Because there can be terrible surprises, however, there can also be good ones. Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments she encounters or creates” (146).

⁷. Ibid., 128.

⁸. Sedgwick, again: “The desire of a reparative impulse, on the other hand, is additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self.” (149) Foucault also addresses this need in historical criticism: “the great problem presented by such historical analyses is not how continuities are established ... but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations. What one is

endangered structure of communal edification, to put the historical aims of this project in an oscillating relationship with the meta-critical intent of promoting reparative hope in the face of our institutional challenges.

Sedgwick insists that this oscillation between these two mutable positions is essential for reparative work – “it is sometimes the most paranoid-tending people who are able to, and need to, develop and disseminate the richest reparative practices.”⁹ Speaking both of myself in particular and of humanities scholars in general, this is a good time to turn our greatest anxiety into our greatest asset – to use historical criticism to rebuild our social purposes. I hope that the prolonged lingering on images of creative reparation, recovery, and rebuilding that these poets posit in their own moments of utter personal and professional destruction might stir the imaginations of early modern scholars, as they use their studies in historical epistemology to meet the practical vicissitudes of our institution's current challenges; and in enacting the very purpose of humanistic study in the public sphere, to justify its place and importance.

seeing, then, is the emergence of a whole field of questions, some of which are already familiar, by which this new form of history is trying to develop its own theory” (*Archaeology*, 5).

⁹ . Ibid., 150.

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